



WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: The eastern section of Luzon will have cloudy skies and rains. Eastern Visayas and the whole of Mindanao will be cloudy with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be mostly cloudy with light rains.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY CYRIL B. BONABENTE, INQUIRER RESEARCH/12/19/06

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Second FRONT PAGE

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Metro Manila	Cloudy with Rains	Iloilo/Bohol	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Cloudy with Rains	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laag	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Cloudy with Rains	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legaspi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Palace cuts ties with 'The Firm'

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

"THE FIRM" HAS LOST ITS MOST IMPORTANT client.

A Malacañang source said that President Macapagal-Arroyo had decided to consult the Palace's designated chief legal counsel, Sergio Apostol, for all her legal concerns, both public and private.

The source, who asked not to be named because he was not authorized to make the disclosure, said the President had cut off all her ties with the Villaraza & Angangco—widely called "The Firm" for its influence and other reasons, after Malacañang had a falling out with the office's founding partners on the Charter change issue.

The source said the President had opted not to hire another private law firm to re-

place Villaraza & Angangco, which had regularly provided legal advice and service to the President and her family even before she stepped into Malacañang.

Representatives of Villaraza & Angangco, which holds office at a Makati City building owned by First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, did not reply to the INQUIRER's calls.

The President was apparently slighted by the stinging rebuke of the people's initiative to change the Constitution by the Supreme Court penned by Associate Justice Antonio Carpio last October where the plan was savaged as a "gigantic fraud on the people."

Palace executives had widely expected Carpio, a founder of Villaraza & Angangco and an appointee of the President to the high court, to vote for and not trash the President's pet crusade.

CUSTODY CASE

'Nicole,' Smith cite similar provisions

By Armand N. Nocum

RAPE VICTIM "NICOLE'S" LAWYERS—THIS time aided by former Senators Jovito Salonga and

Wigberto Tañada—want the petition filed by convicted US Marine Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith seeking his return to US Embassy custody transferred from the Court of Appeals to the Supreme Court.

In a six-page motion filed before the Court of Appeals, Nicole's lawyers said the Supreme Court had exclusive jurisdiction over the issues raised by Smith in his petition.

"The petition for certiorari of (Smith) filed with the (CA) involves pure questions of law regarding the interpretation of provisions of the Visiting Forces Agreement which falls within the exclusive jurisdiction of the Supreme Court en banc," Nicole's lead counsel Evalyn Ursua said.



SALONGA

Salonga, Tañada

Former Senate President Salonga and Tañada signed as co-petitioners and helped in the "preparation and filing" of the petition asking the CA to "motu proprio" (on one's own initiative) transmit the case to the Supreme Court.

In his petition, Smith had asked the CA to nullify the Dec. 12, 2006, order issued by Makati Judge Benjamin Pozon junking the convicted Marine's motion to be transferred from the Makati city jail to the US Embassy.

Salonga and Tañada, who were among the 12 senators who had voted for the removal of US military bases in the country in 1991, will appear for Nicole in case the CA decides to transmit Smith's petition to the SC.

Same argument

In her motion, Nicole, through her lawyers, also asserted that the case should be transferred to the Supreme Court considering that a similar petition filed by her counsel was still pending before the court.

She was referring to the petition for certiorari filed on June 19, 2006, questioning the constitutionality and interpretation of Article V, Paragraph 6, of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA).

The same provision is being used by Smith as grounds for seeking transfer of his custody.

The provision states that: "The custody of any United States personnel over whom the Philippines is to exercise jurisdiction shall immediately reside with US military authorities, if they so request, from the commission of the offense until completion of all judicial proceedings."

"The said petition before the Supreme Court covers the issues that herein petitioner Daniel Smith has raised in his instant petition before the Court of Appeals, particularly the interpretation of Article V, Paragraph 6, of the Visiting Forces Agreement insofar as the issue of custody is concerned," Nicole's lawyers said.

Unconstitutional

In their petition for certiorari, Nicole's lawyers asked the Supreme Court to declare the VFA provision unconstitutional as it violated her right to equal protection under the law being the victim in this case.

Smith maintained that under the same provision, he should have remained in the custody of the US government until the completion of all the judicial proceedings relating to the rape case filed against him.

Smith accused Pozon of committing a grave abuse of discretion and acting without jurisdiction when the judge ordered the Marine's confinement at the Makati city jail.

Mutual agreement

The issue of custody over United States personnel facing criminal charges in the Philippines, according to the petitioner, was to be mutually agreed upon by the executive branches of the US and the Philippines under the VFA.

"Given the foregoing, movants respectfully submit that the instant petition of Daniel Smith should be referred by the Court of Appeals to the Supreme Court in deference to the primary jurisdiction of the Supreme Court over the petition pending before the latter court which involves the same parties and the same and/or similar issues," Nicole's lawyers said.

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Jaworski car bomb set off by remote control, say cops

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE USED TO bomb the minivan of Pasig City Rep. Robert "Dodot" Jaworski appeared to have been triggered by remote control.

The bomb also contained nitroglycerine, a highly explosive substance commonly used in dynamite.

Task Force Avoni head Supt. Federico Terte said initial forensic investigation by the Bomb Data Center showed that what was used to bomb the car was a "remote control activated improvised explosive device."

Terte said the Philippine National Police Crime Laboratory, which studied the debris from the bombed vehicle, confirmed the bomb had contained nitroglycerine.

Police had earlier suspected the bomb was made of cyclonite or RDX powder.

Terte said both substances were highly explosive, while "nitroglycerine was commonly used in dynamite and RDX powder was used in C4 plastic explosives."

Jaworski, his younger brother Ryan and a bodyguard were riding in a silver Toyota Innova on Tuesday last week along C5 Road in Pasig City when they heard a mild bang and smoke began filling the minivan.

Seconds after they jumped out of the vehicle, it blew up in the middle of the north-

bound lane of C5 Road.

Jaworski said he had also asked police officials to probe Pasig City Police chief Senior Supt. Francisco Uyami for his statements immediately after the bombing incident.

Uyami had supposedly told some reporters after the blast that faulty electrical wiring might have caused the explosion.

"I have asked the higher officers in the PNP to look into the statement of Uyami," Jaworski told the INQUIRER.

"I almost died and he said there was nothing to worry about. I looked like a fool," Jaworski said in Filipino.

The INQUIRER tried to call Uyami several times and texted him but he did not reply. He was also supposedly not available when the INQUIRER went to his office.

But Eastern Police District director Chief Supt.

Luizo Ticman told the

INQUIRER that Uyami had explained to him that what he had initially said about the bombing was only his "initial impression."

"I already reprimanded him verbally. I told him not to give premature statements," Tieman said.

Sandigan orders transfer of P29-B Marcos loot to gov't

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

THE SANDIGANBAYAN YESTERDAY ordered the transfer of P29 billion worth of Philippine Telecommunications Investment Corp. (PTIC) shares to the government, almost a year after a Supreme Court ruling that tagged the assets as "il-gotten" either by former President Ferdinand Marcos or his son, President Corason.

The order ends 20 years of explosive litigation among four groups—the government, the Cojuangcos, tycoon Alfonso Yuchengco and the Marcos family—for control of what was once the biggest investment block in Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT), the country's largest telecommunica-

The anti-graft court's Fourth Division ordered the PTIC's corporate secretary to cancel stock certificates representing 111,415 shares issued in the name of Prime Holdings Inc., (PHI) and to issue new ones in the name of the

—1. 334. — 4

The Presidential Commission on Good Government has said the auction of the PTIC shares can easily fetch the government between P25 billion to P30 billion.

"All told, there exists no legal impediment for the immediate enforcement of the SC decision dated Jan. 20, 2006," said the Sandiganbayan. The SC decision overruled a 2002 Sandiganbayan decision dis-

The graft court overruled objections to the transfer filed by intervenors Alfonso Yuchengco and Y Realty Corporation and defendants PIH, Estate of spouses Ramon and Imelda Cojuangco, who cited a pending omnibus motion before the Supreme Court seeking permission to file a third motion for reconsideration.

Sandiganbayan chief sheriff Edgardo Urieta said that his office has ten days to complete the transfer upon receipt of the Writ of Execution from the Fourth Division.

"This will be quick," Urieta said.

Meralco announces power outages in Metro

By Abigail L. Ho

POWER USERS IN SOME PARTS OF the Manila Electric Company franchise area will be experiencing power outages lasting between six and 12 hours in the coming days.

The distribution utility company said they will be undertaking extensive line repairs to ensure uninterrupted power during the holidays.

Meralco vice president for corporate communication Elpi Cuna said the maintenance work will be completed before Christmas. "These projects will ensure that our customers will enjoy a steady and reliable supply of electricity this Christmas and the rest of the holiday season," he added.

He said projects to be completed include those that were shelved to give way to the immediate rehabili-

tation of the electric facilities that were severely damaged by Typhoon "Milenyo" and other devastating weather disturbances.

Today, areas that will experience power interruptions include Tondo in Manila; Angat in Bulacan; Los Baños in Laguna; Antipolo, Baras, Tanay and Taytay in Rizal; Old Balara in Quezon City; Pasig and Cainta.

On Thursday, affected areas will be San Miguel, Malolos, Calumpit and San Ildefonso in Bulacan are scheduled to undergo maintenance works on Wednesday, while portions of Quezon City, San Miguel in Bulacan, and Cavite.

On Friday, there will be brownouts in Mauban and Sampaloc in Quezon, to be followed by portions of Manila, Navotas and Mandaluyong on Saturday.

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FORMAL REPLIES KNOWN TODAY

More countries confirm attendance at Asean summit

By Volt Contreras

SOUTH KOREA HAS CONFIRMED its attendance in the rescheduled 12th Asean Summit in Cebu, an official of the Department of Foreign Affairs said yesterday.

DFA Assistant Secretary Luis Cruz said that based on a report from Ambassador Susan Castrence, the country's envoy to Seoul, what remained to be determined was whether South Korea will be represented by its President Roh Moo-hyun or by Prime Minister Han Myeong-sook.

Earlier, the INQUIRER reported based on unofficial channels that Japan has also confirmed its attendance.

The two North Asian neighbors, plus China, India, Australia, and New Zealand were the dialogue partners of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations which were expected in the Cebu meetings

before these were reset by host Philippines on Dec. 8, or two days before the summit opened.

Doubts and criticisms persist two weeks later over Manila's stated reason for the postponement of the summit: the approaching typhoon "Seniang."

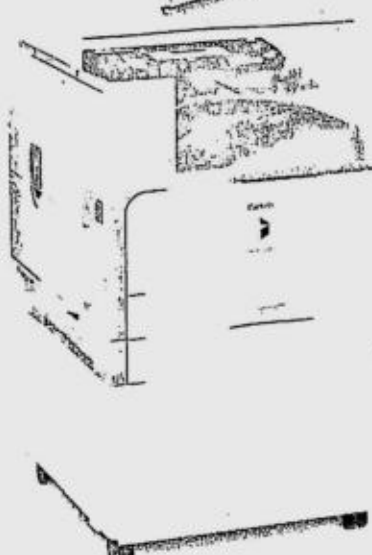
Host officials have repeatedly denied speculations that the last-minute decision was prompted by an alleged terror plot or the massive Church-led movement in Manila against Charter change.

Last Friday, Marciano Paynor, head of the summit's national organizing committee, announced that the nine other Asean members have sent assurances of their attendance.

But Cruz yesterday explained that the DFA expects to receive today formal replies from all the 15 guest nations on the newly "proposed" dates of the summit, which is from Jan. 13 to 15, 2007.

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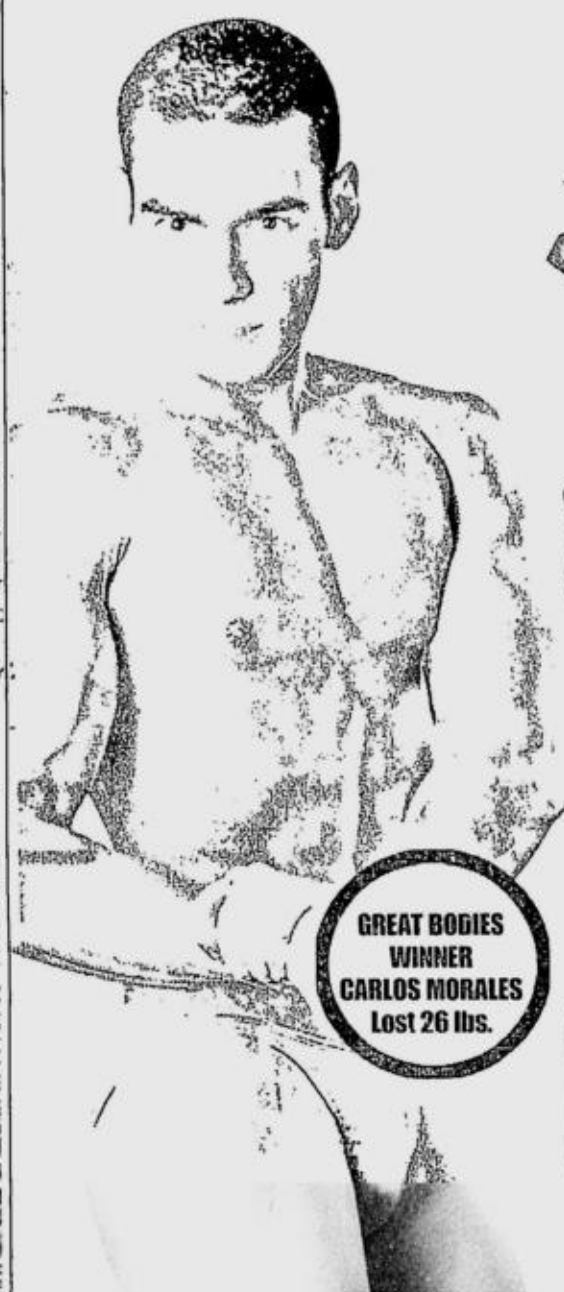
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Water rates up starting Jan. 1

From page A1

Jesus Matubis, Maynilad corporate communications manager, said households would not feel the increase because the industrial and commercial consumers would shoulder the tariff adjustment.

In fact, households will pay lower rates.

Under this scheme, households will pay P119.24 for the first 10 cubic meters, or lower than the current rate of P124.36, said a Maynilad corporate planning officer, who asked not to be named.

For households consuming 30 cubic meters, they will pay P522.25 a month instead of the current rate of P545.77.

In the east zone, water rates of Manila Water will go up 84 centavos per cubic meter.

Inflation rate

The new water rate is 6.3 percent higher than the present rate. The increase is equivalent to the average inflation rate the National Statistics Office recorded for the year.

As a result, Manila Water will be charging its 5.8 million customers an all-in average tariff rate of P20.68 per cubic meter starting next month, up from P19.84.

Consumers using 30 cubic meters a month will be paying P25 more on the average for a total of P620.40.

For households, Manila Water will be charging P63.03 (P6.303 per cubic meter) for the first 10 cubic meters, up from P60.76.

For the next 10 cubic meters, the charge will be P74.70 (P7.47 per cubic meter), up from P72.

The next 20 cubic meters will cost P265.40, or P13.27 per cubic meter.

A family of six in Metro Manila consumes an average of 30 cubic meters of water a month. This means that its monthly water charge will increase from P260.16 to P270.43.

The amount is exclusive of environmental, sewerage and maintenance service charges, and of the value-added tax.

Automatic tariff adjustments for inflation are allowed yearly in the concession agreements that Maynilad and Manila Water entered into with the MWSS.

The inflation adjustment was primarily due to the increase in power rates and fuel costs this year.

Breakdown

Water bills reflect the basic charge, currency adjustment (Cera), foreign currency differential adjustment (FCDA), environmental and sewerage charges, and value-added tax.

Manila Water's rate is broken down into the basic charge

(P15.90, including the inflation adjustment of 96 centavos); Cera (P1), FCDA (12 centavos), environmental and sewerage charges (P1.68), and, VAT (12 percent of bill).

Maynilad's rate consists of the basic charge (P22.47, including inflation adjustment of P1.35); Cera (P1); FCDA (P14); special transitory mechanism for debt payments (P3.31); environmental charge (P2.69), and VAT (12 percent of bill).

The FCDA mechanism allows the two water concessionaires to recover losses arising from a weakening peso because they pay dollar-denominated concession fees to the MWSS and borrow funds from abroad to fund expansion and improve their pipelines.

Under the debt and capital restructuring agreement (DCRA) with creditors, Maynilad is allowed to increase its rates by P3.45 to P4.15 per cubic meter to enable it to service its debt of \$200 million, according to MWSS Deputy Administrator Macra Cruz.

"This is lower than the P4.15 per cubic meter charged last year," Cruz said.

Maynilad needs the new tariff rates to improve its financial viability and regain the trust of investors, according to the rehabili-

IN THE KNOW

MANILA WATER CO. INC. (MWCI) AND MAYNILAD Water Services Inc. are the two private companies that took over the state-owned Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) in August 1997.

The concession agreement assigned for 25 years the east zone to the Ayala-led MWCI and the west zone to Maynilad, whose majority shareholder was the Lopez family's Benpres Holdings.

Since then, MWCI has been servicing over 5 million people in Makati, Marikina, Pasig, Taguig, Pateros, San Juan, Mandaluyong, Quezon City, some parts of Manila, San Juan, Taguig and Pateros.

In January 2005, the profitable operations of Manila Water led the company to offer 824.25 million of its shares to the public, about half of which was set aside for international investors.

However, even as MWCI has proved successful in its venture, Maynilad has experienced serious problems.

In compliance with the contract, Maynilad, which covers all of Manila (except San Andres and Sta. Ana), parts of Quezon City, Makati, Caloocan, Pasay, Parañaque, Las Piñas, Muntinlupa, Valenzuela, Navotas, Malabon and some towns of Cavite province, put up a \$120-million performance bond and assumed 90 percent or \$800 million of MWSS' foreign debt (as part of its concession fee agreement).

This debt doubled in 2000 after the peso dropped drastically. In March 2001, Maynilad stopped paying the concession fees.

Citing "compelling financial, regulatory and natural causes," Maynilad announced in December 2002, that it planned to return the water concession to the MWSS. Under the contract, such a move would for-

feit Maynilad's \$120-million bond in favor of the MWSS.

Maynilad filed a petition before the Quezon City Regional Trial Court seeking relief from creditors, saying it was undergoing corporate rehabilitation and would not be able to meet its maturing debts. In November 2003, the court stopped creditors from collecting payment from the water firm.

But the Supreme Court nullified in June 2004, the Quezon City court's order, thus allowing the MWSS to draw on the performance bond which could cover the unpaid concession fees. The government was finally able to transfer the bond to the account of the Land Bank of the Philippines in January 2005.

In July 2005, a Quezon City court approved a rehabilitation plan which aimed to give the debt-ridden Maynilad its second wind. In accordance with the plan, Benpres Holdings transferred its 84-percent stake worth \$22.7 million to the government. The government, in return, agreed to assume Maynilad's \$32-million debt to foreign and local bank creditors.

The government then sought to bid out its 84-percent stake in Maynilad to private companies. With its plan to privatize Maynilad, the government can avoid paying \$53.7 million in combined financial assistance and subscription fees. The minimum bid price was set at \$56.4 million. This was on top of the required \$30-million performance bond.

On Dec. 7, the MWSS formally awarded the government's stake to the consortium of DMCI Holdings Inc. and Metro Pacific Holdings Inc. after its offer of \$447.23 million topped MWCI's \$399.99-million bid.

DMCI-MPHI will continue Maynilad's operations in the west zone until 2022.

Inquirer Research

tion plan approved by a court and its creditors.

Cruz said Maynilad's FCDA was reduced to 14 centavos.

Maynilad was privatized on Dec. 8. Winning bidders DMCI

Holdings and First Metro Pacific Holdings will take over the water company in January.

The winning consortium has vowed to put in \$503 million to revive the ailing water company

that still has 68 percent in non-revenue water (NRW).

NRW refers to water losses due to pilferage and busted pipes.

With a report from Cyril L. Bonabente, Inquirer Research

Suspected guns-for-hire held in Abra congressman's killing

From page A1

inject politics into what happened to him."

Philippine National Police officials said at least 10 witnesses and suspects in the Bersamin case had been invited for questioning. An unspecified number with suspected links to gun-for-hire syndicates were still in police custody, said Director Jesus Versoza of the PNP's Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG).

A special PNP task force has been set up to coordinate with police in Quezon City and Abra to investigate the attack on the 62-year-old Bersamin and his bodyguard on Saturday after the lawmaker had just attended the wedding of his niece at Mt. Carmel Church in Quezon City's New Manila district.

The P200,000 reward was put up for anyone who could provide information on the killings.

Sketches of gunman

"There is no definite lead yet. There is also no definite motive yet," Versoza told a news conference. But he said that the political angle remained one of their top consid-



A POLICE investigator inspects the body of Rep. Luis Bersamin after gunmen shot him and his bodyguard after a wedding in New Manila, Quezon City.

REUTERS

erations, although a personal motive was also possible.

The CIDG also presented artist's sketches of the triggerman based on descriptions provided by Bersamin's driver, Allan Sawadan, and 13-year-old Rolly Boy Cabaja, who were both wounded in the attack.

Based on the sketches, the gunman was in his late 30s, at least 5'5" in height, of medium build and dark complexioned.

Versoza also announced a mobile phone number—0922-735-8978—through which the public could give tips or information that could help in the investigation. He added that a 24-hour outpost had been set up in New Manila to continue the investigation.

At a press conference, Escudero called on the PNP and the Commission on Elections to "ensure peace and order to prevent a bloody election which appears not farfetched."

Police Santa Claus

In a privilege speech, Isabela Rep. Rodito Albano III bewailed the "dismal condition of peace and order" in the urban centers and countryside.

"I am for policemen dressing

up as Santa Claus and patrolling our malls, but we need more police forces fighting criminals on the ground—beyond the air-conditioned comforts of shopping malls," he said.

He said Bersamin's slaying should not be just "another statistic in the growing body count of so many unsolved murders in this country."

Albano cited the assassinations of former Representatives Moises Espinosa, Henry Lanot, Fortus Seachon and Marcial Punzalan, and lately, the reported foiled slay plot on House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles and the failed bomb attack on Rep. Robert "Dodot" Jaworski Jr.

Pattern of attacks

"The Bersamin murder should not be allowed to become the curtain-raiser of a violent election season," warned Palawan Rep. Antonio Alvarez, a high-ranking member of President Macapagal-Arroyo's political party, the Kabalikatan ng Malayang Pilipino.

Nograles said he saw a pattern of "ruthless attacks against public officials, especially members of Congress."

Said Deputy Majority Leader Abraham Kahilil "Baham" Mitra: "I hope that this will not be a prelude of how elections will be conducted. The military should forgo the holiday break and immediately set up safeguards to make sure elections will be conducted peacefully and orderly."

But Chief Supt. Samuel Pagdilao, PNP spokesperson, said the recent incidents involving congressmen were not "a portent of things to come." He added that "these incidents are cause for concern, but we can't say we are alarmed."

Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos said politicians should not hesitate to ask the agency for police security if they think their lives were in danger during the election period.

"If there's really a serious threat to their lives, then we will provide them with more policemen bodyguards," Abalos said. Up to five police guards will be made available to politicians during the election period from Jan. 15 to June 14. *With reports from Michael Lim Ubac, Alcuin Papa, Jerome Aning and Margaux C. Ortiz, and Vincent Cabreza, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

AFP readies 3-year plan to finish off Reds

From page A1

puesto, Andrew Tiu and Dominador Raymundo. Wounded were Nilo de la Peña and an unidentified man—both civilians.

Esperon said he had been consulting with top regional commanders to assess Oplan Bantay Laya, which was started in January 2002.

"The assessments we are coming up with are very critical in formulating our future actions as regards to addressing the threat of the communist terrorist movement, the Abu Sayyaf,

and other threat groups," he said.

A 'great success'

The military considers Oplan Bantay Laya to have been a "great success" since, based on its estimates, it brought down the NPA's armed strength from 12,000 five years ago to 7,000.

"That's significant. That's a big momentum. We'll take advantage of the momentum," Esperon said.

In June, Ms Arroyo released P1 billion to boost the counterinsurgency campaign. Palace executives then said the military

had been given a two-year deadline to finish off the communist rebels.

Military officials, however, said they understood the President's order to mean that she wanted the communist insurgency finished off by the end of her term in 2010.

The military has come under fire for the string of assassinations and abductions of peasant leaders and activists, mostly in the provinces.

Military authorities denied that they were behind the killings, which has exceeded 700

since 2001 when Ms Arroyo assumed the presidency, based on independent estimates. The INQUIRER count is 262.

Melo Commission

Under pressure from the international community, Ms Arroyo in August formed a commission headed by former Supreme Court Associate Justice Jose Melo to investigate the killings. But human rights groups and leftwing organizations have boycotted its hearings, questioning its independence.

According to initial reports,

the military's new strategy would involve the Philippine National Police in the counterinsurgency campaign to a greater extent.

In October, Ms Arroyo signed Executive Order No. 546 which gave the PNP equal status in the counterinsurgency campaign.

Civilian volunteers

Under the order, the President directed the PNP to actively support the Armed Forces in suppressing insurgency and other internal security threats.

It authorized the PNP to dep-

utilize its own civilian volunteers or the barangay tanods as police auxiliaries, in the same way that the AFP is authorized to deputize its own civilian volunteers or Cagfus (Civilian Auxiliary Force Geographical Units).

AFP public information chief Lt. Col. Bartolome Bacarro said the new internal security plan would address the "changes in strategy, methodology and procedures" of the threat groups. *With reports from Ephraim Aguilar and Bobby Labalan, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

Lawyer doubts Bolante still in US jail

From page A1

July 7 and was told that the US Embassy in Manila had canceled his US visa because of an arrest warrant issued by the Philippine Senate.

The Senate launched a probe of the alleged fertilizer scam and invited Bolante to appear. When he failed to do so, the chamber issued the arrest warrant.

Bolante chose to be detained in the United States rather than be deported to Manila. The US government initiated removal proceedings against him, but he filed a petition for political

asylum on Sept. 17.

Jakarta

Roque said he had spoken with a source who Bolante allegedly wanted to meet with in Jakarta sometime this month.

"This is the reason why I believe there's a chance he's no longer in the US," Roque said.

He said he had alerted lawyers belonging to human rights groups in Indonesia about Bolante's plan to go to Jakarta.

He asked his Indonesian counterparts to inform him should the former agriculture

secretary show up in Jakarta.

Foreign Affairs

Roque also requested the human rights lawyers to tell the Indonesian government of Bolante's alleged offenses in the Philippines and his being wanted by the Senate.

"It should be the Department of Foreign Affairs that should do this, but it would not do so," Roque said.

"Since they are the ones who issued the passport, they should know where he goes," he said.

Roque said Indonesia should

not give safe haven to Bolante.

Transit point

The lawyer said Bolante might use Indonesia as a transit point for allegedly illegally acquired funds, which could be transferred to banks in nearby Singapore.

Roque represented one of the groups that filed an impeachment complaint against Ms Arroyo earlier this year.

One of the issues raised in the complaint was the alleged government misuse of at least P728 million in fertilizer funds for the administration's electoral campaign.



BOLANTE'S sons are shown after a court hearing. MANNY ZAMBRANO/CONTRIBUTOR



PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo welcomes an overseas Filipino worker at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Monday. REUTERS

OFWs get VIP treatment, treats at Naia

By Nikko Dizon

FILIPINO WORKER RODERICK DE GUZMAN, 24, son of a farming couple in Bulacan, works hard cleaning cars in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, in order to save money and someday buy a vehicle for his family back home.

He can use his hard-earned money for other goals now. Arriving home for the Christmas holiday yesterday, he was the lucky winner of a jeepney in a surprise raffle for overseas Filipino workers sponsored by the Manila International Airport Authority. He also got gift certificates and a vacation package worth P50,000 from the Philippine Tourism Authority (PTA).

The raffle draw was part of the government's "Pamaskong Salubong sa OFWs," spearheaded by the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), the highlight of which was President Arroyo personally welcoming them home and handing out giveaways yesterday afternoon.

Even departing OFWs were included in the raffle. One heartwarming winner's story was that of John Estevez, who sold his tricycle to raise the money needed to be able to leave for a job in Dammam, Saudi Arabia.

Yesterday, hours before boarding his flight, he was the lucky winner of a tricycle.

Estevez's wife cried over the marvelous surprise, said Connie Bungag, media affairs chief of the MIAA.

Another departing OFW, Rohona Mangotara, also won a tricycle. Then there was arriving OFW Armando Sales, 42, a father of three, who will also be bringing a tricycle home to Bacolod, as well as gift certificates and a vacation package worth P50,000 from the PTA.

Ati-Athian dancers and chorale groups provided entertainment. Native "dirty" ice cream in carts was free for anyone's taking. Airport staff were dressed in *barongs* and *ternos*—welcome attire usually reserved for arriving heads of state.

A Palace official said it was President Arroyo herself who wanted the "red carpet treatment" for the Filipino workers arriving at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) because of their invaluable contribution to the country's economy.

Over 10 million Filipinos are working overseas, funneling billions of dollars in remittances that have kept the Philippine economy afloat.

An estimated 2,000 OFWs arrive at the Naia daily, according to OWWA figures.

Ms Arroyo led the group of government officials who welcomed home the Filipino passengers on the afternoon flights of Etihad, Gulf Air and Japan Air Lines.

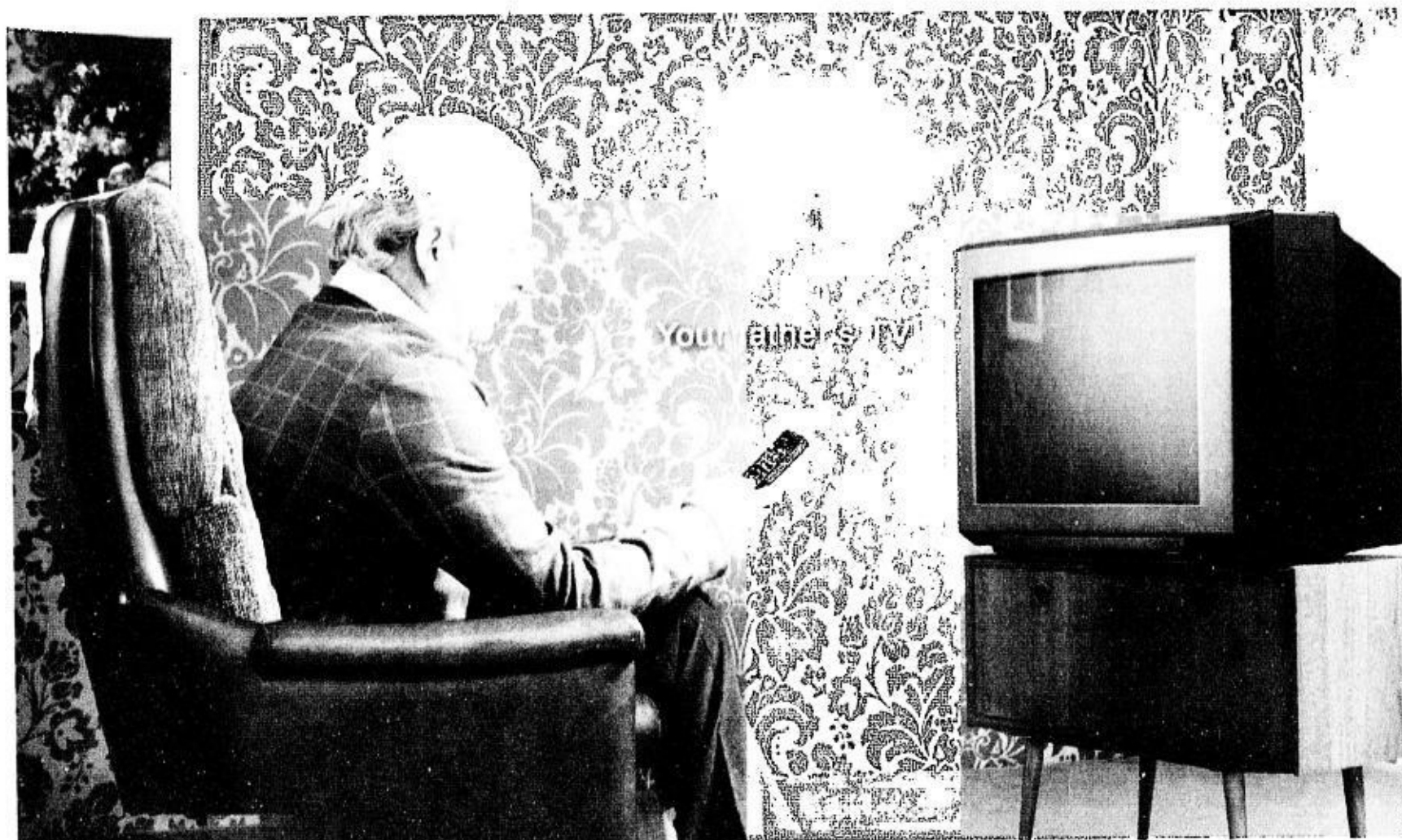
"We're very surprised, but this is nice. It made us happy," Tess Ruanto told the INQUIRER as she held her three-month old son in her arms while her husband Roland tried to fit all the freebies they received at the airport in their already-stuffed Duty Free bags.

The couple came home to spend Christmas with their families after four years in Bahrain, where Roland works as an architect.

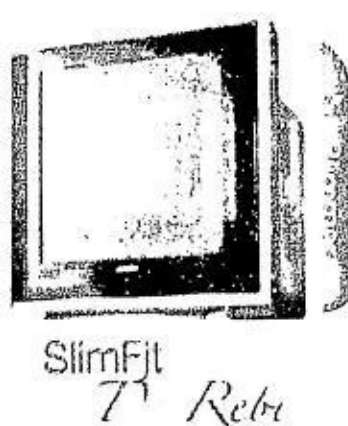
Junjie de la Pena, 29, who works in Dammam, Saudi Arabia, said this was the second time that he received a "red carpet welcome" from the President. "I'm very happy with this welcome," he said.

Arroyo also handed out local delicacies wrapped in *sinamay* to the Filipino passengers.

The OWWA-sponsored raffle for OFWs will run until Dec. 31 at major international airports in Clark, Cebu, Davao and Zamboanga.



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Fresh Cha-cha push seen after Christmas

From page A1

the end, it is the will of the people which should be followed," Ermita said.

He said Ms Arroyo had repeatedly stated that she wanted reforms through Charter change.

Let Christmas pass

"That is what she is looking at but (which) I cannot really say. We do not interfere with what Congress is doing ... with what Ulap (Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines) is doing," Ermita said.

He added: "I don't want to talk right now because I don't think what I will say is right for now. All I can say is we are just putting aside at the moment changing the Constitution."

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye also said that Ms Arroyo had been very open about her support for fundamental change.

"But I think maybe we can let this Christmas season pass. Let's talk about other matters for the time being," Bunye added.

Battle lost but not war

"We have no answer as to the timing (of Cha-cha), we have to ask the people [about] that."

Both Ermita and Bunye are card-carrying members of Lakas, the party at the forefront of Cha-cha crusade.

In Dagupan City, De Venecia said he was "disillusioned" by the way efforts to push Charter change had turned out, but that "in the end, we will triumph."

"We lose one battle to win the war," he told reporters Sunday.

"As long as there's God, we're going to fight. We are pushing for constitutional reforms. We don't have a selfish agenda."

Bishops and lawmakers

De Venecia said he would call all political parties and leaders of civil society to a summit to discuss constitutional reforms.

Waving colorful banners and flags, yesterday's protesters marched to the Ninoy Aquino Monument on Paseo de Roxas in Makati City starting at 9 a.m.

They were later joined by some opposition lawmakers and Catholic Bishops Antonio Tobias of Navotas and Deogra-



SURPRISE RALLY. Holding a Philippine flag, a boy sits with hundreds of militants at a "lightning rally" at the Ninoy Aquino Monument along Ayala Avenue in the central business district of Makati City.

NINO JESUS ORBETA

cias Iñiguez of Caloocan. The two bishops made no speeches.

"It would be a truly very merry Christmas if we make a final push to oust Gloria," Laban ng Masa said in a statement. "This would also be a fitting follow-up to the prayer rally ... This regime has not got a shred of credibility left to govern this country."

Tobias distanced himself from the protesters' call for Ms Arroyo's removal from office, telling reporters: "I have not given up hope on GMA."

Even militants surprised

Taking the stage, Taguig-Pateros Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano called Ms Arroyo a squatter in Malacañang.

"This time around, we will make sure that we will be able to send the message clear," he said.

The unannounced demonstration apparently even caught some participants

by surprise. Some militant leaders said they only received invitations to join the rally through text messages.

Traffic was snarled along Ayala Avenue, compelling traffic enforcers to reroute traffic.

Also seen mingling with the crowd were former Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Akbayan party-list Rep. Risa Hontiveros-Baraquel and Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino Rep. Agapito "Butz" Aquino.

"As I see it, the groups present at the prayer rally (on Sunday) were not satisfied and they want to continue it here," Iñiguez told reporters.

Palace unimpressed

Aside from Charter change, the rallyist raised issues like poverty, the Subic rape case and the "Hello Garci" controversy.

Ermita was unimpressed by the size of

Sunday's rally organized by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines and backed by other religious groups, the political opposition, some businessmen, militants and leaders of civil society.

Why turnout was low

"A number of the opposition were there, some senators and personalities were there to exploit the event because they thought it would be a black mark on the administration. But it came to naught, the crowd was very thin," Ermita said in a separate interview on radio dzXL.

Organizers had predicted they could rally up to half a million people. But only up to 30,000, by some police estimates, showed up.

"As God would have it, what they expected did not materialize," said Ermita.

The chief coordinator of Sunday's ral-

ly, ex-Vatican Ambassador Henrietta de Villa, offered several reasons for the relatively low turnout.

Topping her list was the administration's claim that provocateurs might sow violence and this "somehow dissuaded some people" from coming, she told the INQUIRER.

"The warnings were tactical," said Msgr. Pedro Quitorio, CBCP spokesperson.

A signal to Malacañang

De Villa also said she was told by El Shaddai leader Bro. Mike Velarde that some of his members were blocked by police along some roads leading to the Luneta.

Asked if the low turnout might embolden administration allies to revive their Cha-cha plan, De Villa said: "I hope not. They should take it as a signal that the people are wide awake."

De Villa said the administration's turnabout on convening a constituent assembly might have also been a factor.

Another was the change in schedule from the original rally date of Friday to Sunday, said Quitorio.

De Villa said the public, especially government officials, should not lose sight of the rally's call for every Filipino to have "a new outlook and attitude on politics."

Fr. Romeo Intengan of the Ateneo de Manila University's Center for Strategic Studies said the Church might have held back on its rally mobilization plans.

He said that unlike in 1997, when a similar rally drew hundreds of thousands of people, the Archdiocese of Manila this time did not cancel Masses and tell people to go instead to the Luneta.

"It was not a full mobilization," Intengan said. "It (the Church) was not in a fighting mode after (the administration) backed down on the constituent assembly."

Ramon Casiple, executive director of the Institute for Political and Electoral Reform, disputed claims that Church influence was waning. He said it was precisely the threat of a big Church-led rally that forced Cha-cha forces to back off. *With reports from Christian V. Esguerra and Norman Bordaadora, and Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

Bunye says character change meant for all

From page A1

failed in its mission of shaping the character of the Filipinos.

"To ask for the character

change is actually to ask for moral upheaval or a moral revolution, which is basically the jurisdiction of the Church," Santia-

"This is a confession, an admission, on the part of the Catholic bishops that they had failed all these centuries, during which we observed Roman Catholicism, in

shaping the character of the Filipino Catholic," she said.

"They should beat their breasts and ask for forgiveness, if that is the case."

Church role

Bunye said Ms Arroyo supported the Church in "pushing for a complete moral transformation."

"Good values are the foundation of a stable democratic society and we hope that the Church will continue to take the lead in this advocacy," he said.

He said transforming values was at the root of the public clamor for change.

The CBCP secretary general, Msgr. Juanito Figeroa, had said that questions surrounding Ms Arroyo's disputed election victory in 2004, as well as other political scandals, were compelling factors for Sunday's rally.

Moral regeneration

Bunye said religious leaders were well within their rights to speak out on issues affecting their constituents' lives, specifically on "moral values."

"The Church continues to be an important and relevant stake-

holder in Philippine society. We look to the religious leaders to spearhead the moral rearmament of Filipinos," he said.

He said moral regeneration was within the province of religious institutions.

Applies to priests, too

Asked if Cha-cha was a moral rather than a political issue, Bunye said: "There are many aspects to that but I'm not a theologian. Since they are proposing character change, which we associate with strengthening moral values, then the religious institution would play a very big role."

Congressional leaders said character change must also involve the men of the cloth.

Cagayan de Oro Rep. Constantino Jaraula, the House of Representatives' point man in its failed Charter change (Cha-cha) drive, supported the call for character change but stressed that it "may be needed just as well, if not more, by those opposing (Cha-cha)."

New Year's resolution

"It's applicable to all, maybe even applicable from the source," said Jaraula, citing

what he said was the failure of Church leaders to strictly enforce vows of celibacy and poverty among priests.

House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles said that everyone—including "bishops, businessmen, media, administration and opposition (politicians), not only congressmen"—should undergo character change.

"That should be our New Year's resolution. Everybody," said Nograles.

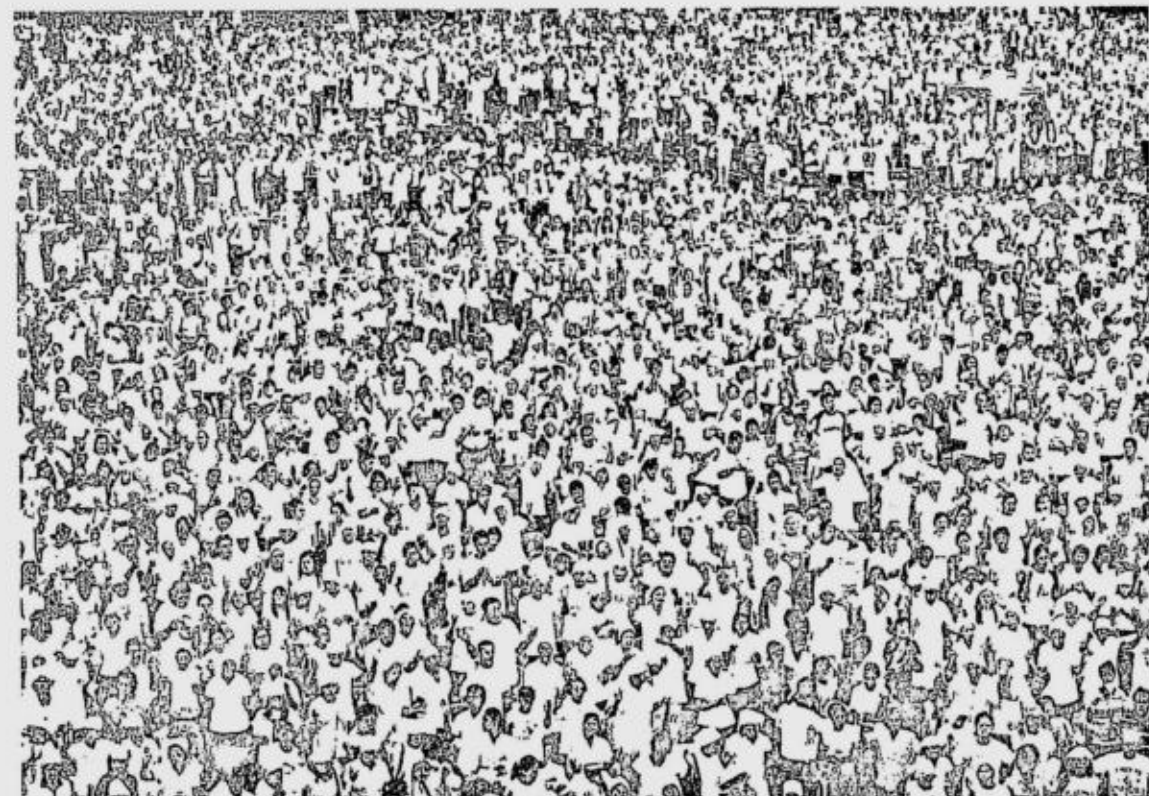
He also said the Church should not meddle in politics. "Whatever happened to the separation of Church and State?" he asked.

'Cycle of desperation'

Speaker Jose de Venecia said that character change was not all that was needed.

"Even if you change the hearts of men but if you don't change the system of government, the country will face the same cycle of failure and desperation," he said.

"So we need a change in the system of government in order that a parallel change in the hearts of men can affect reforms in society." *With a report from Michael Lim Ubac*



CANDLES are lit during Sunday's Catholic Church-led prayer rally at the Quirino Grandstand in Manila. ENKARAZAS

Cold wind keeps 'Tomas' ...

From page A1

The prevailing northeast monsoon, on the other hand, would keep the storm from intensifying into a supertyphoon the way Typhoon "Seniang" (Utor) did early this month, Cruz said. Four typhoons battered the country in the last four months, killing about 1,400 people.

"The northeast monsoon blowing cold air into the archipelago will keep it from getting stronger. If there's anything a weather disturbance doesn't want, it's cold air," he said.

The eastern parts of the archipelago, particularly the Mayon Volcano area southeast of Manila, are still reeling from landslides and flooding brought on by Supertyphoon "Reming" (Durian) on Nov. 30, which left more than 1,000 people dead.

Nine days later, Seniang hit the

country, killing more than 20 people and forcing the government to postpone twin Asian summits in Cebu City. "Milenyo" (Xangsane), in September, and "Paeng" (Cimaron) one month later also caused significant damage.

The UN last week asked donors for US\$46 million (euro34.9 million) to provide tens of thousands of people with food and shelter.

65-kph winds

As of 4 p.m. yesterday, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration estimated Tomas to be 1,290 kilometers east of Luzon.

Surface and satellite data showed that it was packing maximum sustained winds of 65 km per hour and gustiness of up to 80 kph. Tomas was moving northwest at 19 kph.

The high-pressure area over the archipelago, said Cruz, was making Tomas veer more to the north than west and is expected not to make landfall.

It is expected to be 900 km east of northern Luzon this afternoon and 670 km east-northeast of Basco, Batanes.

On Thursday afternoon, it is expected to be 800 km northeast of Basco.

Okinawa-bound

"It will take a northwest path before taking a northward track toward Okinawa in Japan," Cruz said.

Pagasa said the storm would not affect any part of the country today but a moderate to strong northeasterly surface windflow would prevail over Luzon and the Visayas.

An easterly wave will also be over Mindanao.

As a result of the windflow and the easterly wave, the eastern section of Luzon will have cloudy skies with rains, while eastern Visayas and the whole Mindanao will be cloudy with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms.

The rest of the country will be mostly cloudy with light rains, Pagasa said.

It added that moderate to strong winds blowing from the northeast will prevail over Luzon and Visayas, and the coastal waters along these areas will be moderate to rough.

"Elsewhere, winds will be light to moderate blowing from the east and northeast with slight to moderate seas," Pagasa said.

The Philippines is hit by about 20 typhoons and storms a year. Tomas (or Trami, the name of a decorative tree in Vietnam) is the 20th this season. *With an AP report*

Humans can track scent like dogs, but not as well

From page A1

nose to the ground and crawling along with their bottoms in the air.

The researchers' subjects, who were asked to track a chocolate scent across a meadow, inched along at a speed of, well, one inch a second.

Though their pace accelerated to two inches a second after a few training sessions, it seemed clear enough why trackers, like the Bushmen of the Kalahari, relied on eyesight to follow an animal's trail.

The researchers did not run a dog versus human competition because the dogs were in a different league, sometimes smelling a dragged target (a dead bird) from the starting line and making a beeline for it.

The purpose of the experiment was to inquire whether having

two nostrils spaced slightly apart helped track a scent, just as having two ears enabled the brain to locate the source of a sound.

But the dogs could not report what they were doing and objected to the procedures, like having one nostril blocked.

So the Berkeley researchers, led by Noam Sobel and Jess Porter, chose more docile experimental animals—psychology department undergraduates.

As they warmed to the task, the undergraduates spontaneously mimicked some of the behavior of tracking dogs, like sniffing faster to take in more olfactory information.

Sobel said it was not a huge surprise to find that people could track a scent, but no one had systematically tested the possibility. *New York Times News Service*

Rosales back in hospital after fiery homily at rally

By Christian V. Esguerra

MANILA ARCHBISHOP GAUDENCIO CARDINAL Rosales was back in the hospital soon after delivering a homily on Sunday assailing the Arroyo administration's move to overhaul the Constitution.

The 74-year-old prelate was confined again at the Cardinal Santos Memorial Hospital in San Juan due to an intestinal illness he has been suffering since last week, according to Peachy Yamsuan, the archdiocese's media officer.

Yamsuan revealed that Rosales first entered the hospital Wednesday and was allowed by his doctors to leave the hospital to attend the prayer rally—provided that he would return afterward.

"That was his agreement with his doctors," Yamsuan told the INQUIRER yesterday.

Rosales appeared weak, his voice hoarse when he celebrated the Mass with 10 other bishops at the Quirino Grandstand in Manila.

Breaking his usual silence on political issues, he reiterated the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines' position that any change in the Charter should come through a credible constitutional convention.

"What breathes life into law is the spirit of man, not the spirit of the law moving man," he said in Filipino to thunderous applause from a crowd estimated by organizers at around 50,000. Police placed the crowd at 15,000 to 30,000.

Rosales called for a different kind of "Charter," one that would advocate "character change," not Charter change.

"There must be reform in many of us ... in all of us," he said.

Parts of the cardinal's homily sounded fiery despite his weak condition that afternoon.

Yamsuan said he had to be confined Wednesday following what had been initially thought of as food

poisoning. She said the prelate was diagnosed to be suffering from "diarrhea compounded by ulcer."

The INQUIRER later learned that Rosales suffered a bum stomach after attending a function at Cardinal Santos the day before.

Yamsuan said Rosales was expected to be discharged today.

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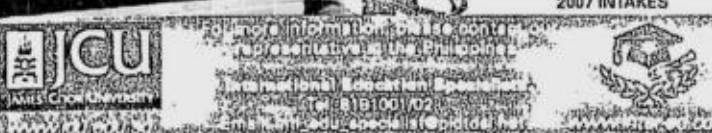
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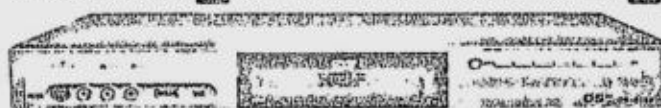
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THE DAILY GOSPEL



Tuesday, December 19, 2006
3rd Week of Advent

1st Reading: Jdg 13:2-7, 24-25
Gospel: Luke 1:5-25

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there lived a priest named Zechariah, belonging to the priestly clan of Abiah. Elizabeth, Zechariah's wife, also belonged to a priestly family. Both of them were upright in the eyes of God and lived blamelessly in accordance with all the laws and commands of the Lord, but they had no child. Elizabeth could not have any and now they were both very old.

Now, while Zechariah and those with him were fulfilling their office, it fell to him by lot, according to the custom of the priests, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense. At the time of offering incense all the people were praying outside; it was then that an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. On seeing the angel, Zechariah was deeply troubled and fear took hold of him.

But the angel said to him, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah, be assured that your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son and you shall name him John. He will bring joy and gladness to you and many will rejoice at his birth.

This son of yours will be great in the eyes of the Lord. Listen: he shall never drink wine or strong drink, but he will be filled with holy spirit even from his mother's womb. Through him many of the people of Israel will turn to the Lord their God. He himself will open the way to the Lord with the spirit and power of the prophet Elijah; he will reconcile fathers and children, and lead the disobedient to wisdom and righteousness, in order to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."

Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I believe this? I am an old man and my wife is elderly, too." The angel replied, "I am Gabriel, who stands before God, and I am the one sent to speak to you and bring you this good news! My words will come true in their time. But you would not believe and now you will be silent and unable to speak until this has happened."

Meanwhile the people waited for Zechariah, and they were surprised that he delayed so long in the sanctuary. When he finally appeared, he could not speak to them and they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He remained dumb and made signs to them.

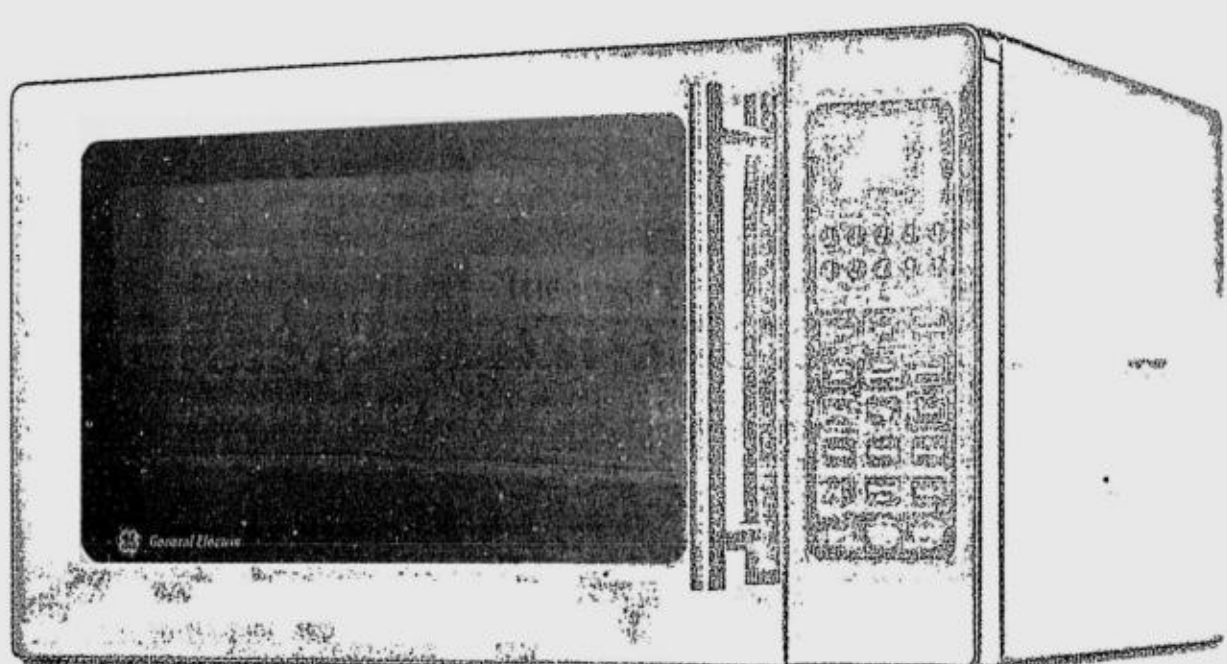
When his time of service was completed, Zechariah returned home and some time later Elizabeth became pregnant. For five months she kept to herself, remaining at home, and thinking, "What is the Lord doing for me! This is his time for mercy and for taking away my public disgrace."

Commentary

God is drawing near to us and we practice seeing what is coming with marvelous stories. We hear of Manoah and his barren wife. Yet an angel appears to her and tells her of her child's birth and the child's strength and consecration to God who will deliver Israel. And Samuel is conceived and born. And the story is repeated. Zechariah, a priest, and his wife, are barren. But they are just and obedient, and elderly. Yet an angel appears now to Elizabeth's husband and tells him she will conceive and bear a son. But Zechariah doubts—how? And Gabriel stuns him into dumbness until the child is born. They will live with the vision, silently as it starts to come true.

God is seeking to be conceived in us. Do we believe?

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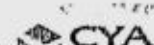
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Deadly label

LAST SATURDAY, NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER Norberto Gonzales urged that left-leaning party-list candidates be labeled as communists to caution voters, particularly soldiers and policemen, against electing what he called "democracy's enemies" to Congress. "It is important to show soldiers and police what groups are being used by the communists to continue their bad intentions on the public," he said.

EDITORIAL We thought the Cold War was over, but here we have the national security adviser smearing leftists as "communists." There was a time when labeling someone a "communist" or "leftist" practically set him up as a target for assassination by government forces. Now it seems, the time is coming back, no small thanks to the national security adviser.

The terms Left and Right were first used in France during the French Revolution when the aristocrats sat on the right side of the assembly and the commoners sat on the left. From that time on the Right has been associated with ideology that favors an elite social group and the Left has been associated with ideology that favors "the masses."

Today, "Left" refers to the complex of individuals or organizations that advocate liberal, often radical, measures to bring about change in the established order, especially in politics, to achieve equality, freedom and well-being for the masses. A leftist is a person or group that adheres to the left wing on political issues. A communist is one who believes in a social and economic formation based on a classless social system and public ownership of the means of production.

Before the Cold War to be called a leftist in the United States was not so bad. But things changed after World War II. Writer Geoff Price said that one of the major problems in American political consciousness today comes from a misrepresentation of the political spectrum. "This is partly the result of a deliberate effort to put all of America's enemies (fascists and communists) into the same basket after World War II, and a deliberate effort by the American 'Right' to classify everything that they oppose as 'leftist,'" he said.

After World War II, Republicans tried to portray the Democratic Party of Roosevelt and Truman as "Red," thereby associating "liberalism" with "communism." The "Red" labeling worked well in the 1950s, especially during the McCarthy era, and created a lasting impact on how Americans viewed politics. Filipino politicians imitated the McCarthyist tactics, with the result that liberals and leftists were demonized as "communists."

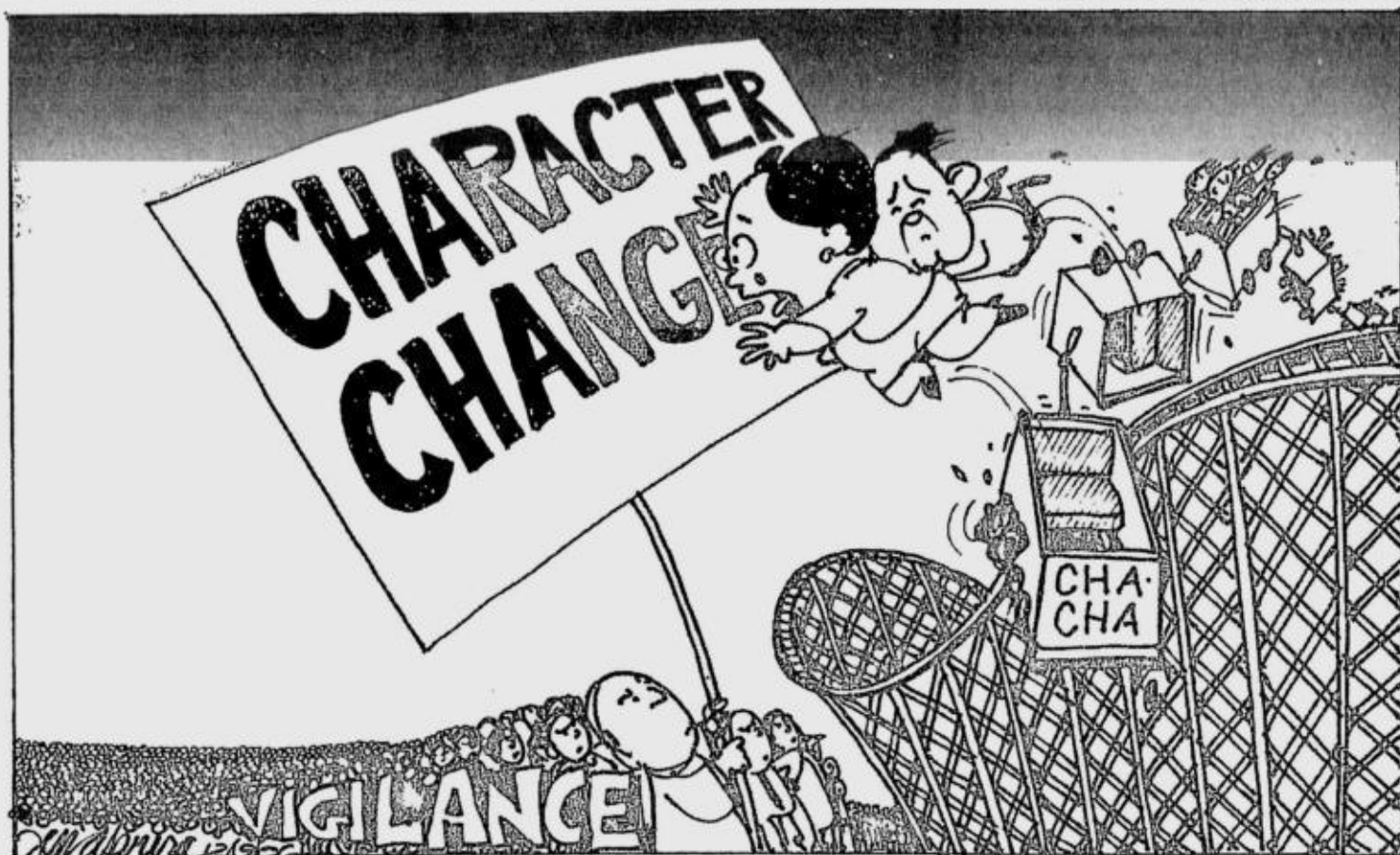
When Ferdinand E. Marcos imposed martial law in 1972, he said his purpose was "to save the republic [from communism] and reform society." But Patricio N. Abinales, in a paper for the Center for Southeast Asian Studies in Kyoto University, said that when Marcos became more repressive, Filipinos began to doubt the validity of his anti-communist crusade. The Communist Party of the Philippines took off after it toned down its Maoist rhetoric, "indigenized" its strategy and became the leading anti-imperialist force and advocate of nationalism.

In the 1980s, the moderates and anti-communist politicians reached out to Left. "In an odd way," Abinales said, "what happened in the 1970s and early 1980s was that being communist ... was becoming acceptable to many, especially in the urban areas. To be Left was hip, and respect for the Left grew as the dictatorship began to weaken."

Thus, to be "leftist" became politically acceptable. Leftists were encouraged to go above ground, and the culmination of the "legitimization" of the Left was the inclusion of a provision in the new Constitution for the election of party-list representatives who would constitute 20 percent of the total number of congressmen.

The party-list provision gives voice to the under-represented sectors like labor, peasants, urban poor, indigenous cultural communities and the youth. Since 1998 left-leaning groups have been getting more seats in the House of Representatives: two out of 13 party-list representatives in 1998, seven out of 20 in 2001 and 10 out of 24 in 2004.

Now Gonzales would set back political progress, shut out leftist groups and individuals from Congress, and worse, set them up as targets for assassination for being "democracy's enemies." This is the sort of rhetoric that legitimizes the unabated killing of activists and militants. Such rhetoric should have no place in a free, democratic and civilized society.



Muffled crisis

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado



IT FLAUNTS NO BANNERS AND RARELY MAKES page one. "Deprivation of access to water is a silent crisis," says the United Nations Human Development Report 2006. But like shriveling away from chronic hunger, this muffled emergency savages the poor. And it is tolerated by the affluent powerful even as it kills more children through disease than war.

Today's "crisis in water and sanitation is, above all, a crisis of the poor," says the new UN Development Program study, "Beyond Scarcity: Power, Poverty and the Water Crisis." In Sweden or Japan, water-borne disease is a subject for history books. But in the Philippines, Indonesia or Laos, it involves hospital wards and morgues. "People living in the slums of Jakarta, Manila, Mumbai and Nairobi face shortages of clean water. [But] their neighbors in high income suburbs ... keep their lawns green and swimming pools topped up," the study says. "[The poor] pay five to ten times more for water per unit than those in high-income areas of their own cities." Patchy research indicates that the poorest "spend more than 10 percent of their household income on water."

This clones the pattern of skewed wealth and political power. "Gated enclaves" have piped water in most homes. Only a quarter piped water reach the poorest 20 percent. And it trickles through vendors, standpipe operators or truck owners who add on to the cost.

"By means of water," says the Koran, "we give life to everything." Beyond physical survival, water underpins health, economic growth, fulfillment of human potential. "Access to safe water is a fundamental human need and basic human right," former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan wrote.

Scientists agree that the minimum needed for decent human life is about 20 liters a day. Globally, about 1.1 billion—roughly the population of India—can get five liters a day. That's a tenth of the average daily amount used in rich countries to flush toilets.

National water statistics "mask a system of water apartheid based on wealth, location and

other markers." HDR 2006, for example, reveals that 85 out of every 100 Filipinos have access to improved water sources. That's behind Korea's 92 but far better than Cambodia's 41.

Stark inequalities between provinces emerge in the Philippine Human Development Report 2005. Only three out of every 100 in Laguna lack for safe water sources. It is 72 for Masbateños. And in Cebu, 28 of every 100 lack potable water. Sogod town reported coliform contamination in the latest of treadmill outbreaks within Cebu. "Not having access to water and sanitation is a polite euphemism for people drinking from wells and ditches polluted with human and animal excrement."

The Asian Development Bank's "Key Indicators" reveals that most people deprived of clean water cluster in this region. Diarrhea is one of the top four killers of kids under five. Worldwide, sick kids lose 433 million school days. And the yearly death toll from diarrhea of an under-5 population equivalent to London and New York combined.

"Unclean water and the resulting poor sanitation [pose] a threat that starts at birth," the report states. "The number of deaths associated with these twin threats is not widely appreciated. Globally, diarrhea kills more people than tuberculosis or malaria."

And every peso, rupiah, baht or dollar spent on water and sanitation generates, on average, eight in productivity gains and costs averted.

"The sewer is the conscience of the country," Victor Hugo wrote in "Les Misérables," describing 19th-century Paris.

And in Jakarta and Manila, old sewerage systems have been overwhelmed by rapid urban-

ization and chronic underinvestment... Less than 4 percent of Metro Manila's population is connected to the sewer network."

Richer homes and large housing complexes build their own septic tanks. There are over a million tanks in Manila. About 40 percent of households have latrines.

But sludge treatment and disposal facilities are rare. So, 10 million people dump untreated waste into the Pasig River. "The Pasig is one of the world's most polluted rivers," the study says. "Human waste accounts for 70 percent of the pollution load... And around one third of all illness in Manila is water related."

"Ambitious blueprints were drawn up for cleaning the Pasig. But none moved beyond the planning board." Government and water providers failed to "develop a coherent strategy for tackling Manila's sanitation crisis."

Most poor households are not connected to municipal water systems. And many homes cannot afford the cost of connection—about three months' income for the poorest 20 percent. "Research in Cebu found five patterns of water source among such homes: vendors—4 percent; public well—34 percent; private well—15 percent; public standpipe—8 percent; and neighbor connected to water system—38 percent."

"Many publicly owned utilities are failing the poor, combining inefficiency and unaccountability in management, inequity in financing," says the report. And there are "no ready-made solutions."

Some broad lessons emerge from Brazil, Columbia, Senegal and South Africa: (1) "Political leadership matters"; and (2) "Progress depends on setting attainable targets in plans that are backed by financing provisions and strategies for overcoming inequality."

Cebu has no plan, for example, that sets targets. "And it has a 'black hole' for its water policy," Cebu Daily News has noted.

"Helping provide clean water and basic sanitation are more than just a passing fad," British Chancellor Gordon Brown has aptly said. "They are a commitment for our generation."

(E-mail: juanlmercado@gmail.com)

Reaping the whirlwind

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros



THE LATEST CASUALTIES ARE ABRA REP LUIS Bersamin and his bodyguard. Bersamin had just emerged from the womb of Mt. Carmel Church and was about to board his car in the churchyard when a couple of men walked up to him and his bodyguard from behind and shot them dead. The assassins gunned down his bodyguard first before they shot him in the head as he whirled around. He died on the spot.

This murder occurred only days after the attempted murder of Pasig Rep. Robert "Dodot" Jaworski. Jaworski had every reason to fume and cry out, "Shame on you!" at those saying he had done this to himself as an election gimmick. The state of his car ruled out the idea, unless he was the kind of devil-may-care, winner-take-all, risk-taker who would cheat death by the skin of his teeth just to improve his chances at the polls. His car was reduced to a blackened pile of junk. But for the fact that the explosive tucked under the hood of his car emitted smoke before exploding, giving him time to scramble out, Jaworski would now be playing the harp with Bersamin in the ethereal regions.

Before this, the son of a mayor of Pampanga was also shot dead a couple of weeks ago. I forget the details now, but I heard the mayor being interviewed on TV, his voice quaking with grief. He went on to issue veiled warnings at "whoever did this," but whose identities he seemed to know very well, or deeply suspected.

I do not know what specific motives impelled these slayings. Abra politics has always been a little murderous, and Jaworski himself points to drugs as the cause of the attempt on his life. He has apparently been at odds with the drug lords of Pasig.

I do not know what specific motives impelled these slayings, or near-slayings, but I do know why they have happened, and why they will happen again and again and more brazenly over the next few months. Indeed, well past the May elections. They have happened and will happen because we have failed to stop the killings. Or more specifically, they have happened and will happen because we have failed

to stop the killings of political activists and journalists in the provinces. The one is to the other as cause and effect. Very direct cause and very direct effect.

Not quite incidentally, the killings of activists and journalists continue unabated to this day. At the same time that Jaworski's car was bombed, a human rights lawyer and Bayan Muna member were murdered in Sorsogon. The way they were murdered made even the phrase "culture of impunity" sound almost tame. Lawyer Gil Gojol had just left the court after a hearing when he was gunned down in his van by motorcycle-riding gunmen. Bayan Muna's Cisanto Frivaldo was right in his home when two men burst into it and shot him dead. Even home and hearth no longer offer protection to potential victims in this country.

I did warn in a column only a couple of weeks ago that we would be idiots to imagine that these killings would be confined to political activists and journalists in the provinces. The likelihood that they would spill over to other groups, notably politicians in light of the impending elections, I said, wasn't just strong but inevitable. I said that with these killings left unsolved and unchecked, the party-list candidates in particular stood to be an endangered species. Or on a larger plane the opposition candidates.

That remains a very real threat. Not least in light of that banana-eating homicidal maniac Norberto Gonzalez proposing to paint the party-list candidates red. He said in a radio interview: "There will be plenty who will run in the party lists in the coming elections. As national security adviser, it is important for me to show

soldiers and police what groups are being used by the communists to continue their bad intentions on the public." If he had thought to sign their death warrants, he could not have been more bloodthirsty.

But as has clearly turned out, the bloodletting won't just go the party-list or opposition candidates' way. Barely had the spit dried on my mouth, or the ink from my pen, when the slayings and/or near-slayings above took place with chilling rapidity. And with the same brazenness or utter contempt of law or decency that makes "impunity" such a pale description. Even churches no longer offer refuge from the death merchants.

The murder of Bersamin, in particular, throws us back to the pre-martial-law days when warlords walked this earth and Floro Crisologo was gunned down in church as he knelt on a pew to receive Holy Communion.

Frankly, I don't know why we are so dense we cannot see that when we tolerate the killing of one group of people, we tolerate the killing of all groups of people. That when we incite the murder of other people, we invite the murder of ourselves. History does not lack for lessons there. You agree to the pogrom of the Jews, you agree to the slaughter of yourself.

We do not stop the killings of journalists and political activists right now, we assure that the coming elections will become one of the bloodiest in our postwar history, if not the bloodiest. We do not stop the killings of journalists and political activists right now, we raise a culture that says it is perfectly acceptable to dispatch your enemies to the next life, there is nothing in heaven or earth to deter you from it. That is a culture that like toxic rain, or an Arab curse, will befall all of us, and our children's children. The bullet that finds the brains of other people will not lodge there permanently. It will find yours, too.

If I recall right, there's something in the Bible that says as you sow, so shall you reap. It's true, whether you believe the Bible or the Koran.

You sow death, you will reap death.

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A Christmas story

POLITICAL
TIDBITSBelinda
Olivares-Cunanan

ONE GOOD THING LAST SUNDAY'S RALLY achieved, aside from gathering a big crowd to pray, is that it put Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales on record as reiterating the "Church position" that Charter change should be made by a constitutional convention, "whose members would be elected and not beholden to the power-holders." From his statements, the cardinal seems more open to change than other ranking prelates, but he said two things are necessary: the "right time" and "unity" among the people.

This formula, however, may not allow Cha-cha to happen. For there will always be those who stand to benefit from the change, and those who will be *dejado*. Among the latter will be those elected in May 2007, who will be asked to give up their posts in a shift to a parliamentary and the new president in 2010 who could be reduced to a figurehead or see his post abolished.

The bishops said there should be a change in character of the people first, especially politicians, before Cha-cha. But its advocates opine that even if angels were to rule this country, they would find it impossible under the present political structure. For instance, corruption is next to impossible to reduce if politicians spend hundreds of millions to get elected to national office. The bishops insist on reforms first, but as Star columnist Jarius Bondoc rightly said, many of the reforms need constitutional amendments to put in place.

With Cha-cha at a dead-end amid continuing political turmoil, a rightist faction could be encouraged to take over and write a new charter themselves. This is what happened in Thailand recently.

INA Foundation, headed by Gina de Venecia, is composed of mothers who have lost a child. Last Saturday, these mothers ushered guests, led by President Macapagal-Arroyo, to the inauguration of their brand-new INA Healing Center in the DSWD Compound in Batasan Hills, Quezon City. The center will be a haven where other bereaved mothers can receive spiritual and psychological therapy and livelihood training, and where "grief counselors" will be trained to assist families in dis-

aster areas. The INA mothers raised the funds to build the center on land donated by the DSWD designed for free by young architect Dan Lichauco. For the INA moms it was a triumph over bereavement.

Gina de Venecia conceived of this project after her daughter KC perished in a terrible fire that gutted their Dasmariñas Village home on Dec. 16, 2004. GMA, in her remarks, noted the first reading at the Mass celebrated by Msgr. Augusto G. Laban which recalled how the prophet Elijah was taken up to heaven in a "chariot of fire." KC, she said, was also taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire.

What stole the show was a yellow and green butterfly that perched on Speaker Jose de Venecia's shoulder, and which not even electric fans trained on the front row could shake off. The butterfly has become a symbol of KC since her funeral and Gina said KC was embracing her father that morning.

During the impromptu fellowship after the lunch, with two-thirds of the crowd gone, some startling revelations worthy of a Christmas story were made. A psychotherapist connected with a leading university revealed that KC had appeared to her in a dream two nights earlier and asked her to attend that ceremony, even suggesting the blouse that she should wear, which had designs of yellow and green butterflies. She said she told the girl, whom she had never met, that she had two appointments that morning, but to her surprise, these were cancelled. Hurrying to the DSWD compound, she had a conversation with KC in her mind. How would I recognize you? she asked the girl. KC said she would be hovering around as a butter-

fly. But there would be many butterflies around, the therapist said. KC said she would hear her father cough. Sure enough JCV, with the butterfly on his shoulder, coughed, prompting Gina to ask if he was okay.

But the more startling revelation was made by Fr. Bernie Carpio, former parish priest of Don Bosco Church in Makati and now assigned in Pasig. He revealed that on Dec. 13, 2004, a young girl came to the church and told him she wanted to make her confession. He was quite harassed, as he had to officiate at a wedding in half an hour. When he asked why she was so insistent, she said her days were numbered and she wanted to make sure she would go to heaven. She said she was nervous as she hadn't gone to confession in a long time and was a "sinner." The priest ushered her into the sacristy and "guided" her through what he judged to be "a very good confession." At one point, she asked him to make sure to tell people in his homilies to "prepare themselves through confession." Before leaving he asked who she was and she answered simply, "KC."

Carpio was shocked four days later to read that the girl was the Speaker's daughter and she had perished in a fire. At her wake, he spoke to her astounded parents about their encounter in the church. But last Saturday, he revealed to the small group for the first time that he had since then prayed to KC for her intercession to God, as she definitely is in heaven now. Three of his petitions have been granted. One was to be united with his two sisters with whom he had had a misunderstanding for 15 years. One day, he narrated, one of them walked into the church and asked for his forgiveness. She died within a week after a heart attack.

Next, he asked that his brother, who had been estranged from his wife for 20 years, would reconcile with her, and they did. Then he himself was told by his doctor that he needed surgery for a block in his heart. KC, he said, interceded for him and the block disappeared.

Said Father Carpio to the INA members: "Don't pray for your dead child. Pray to him or her as they are in heaven and God loves them."

Whose party was it anyway?

AT LARGE



Rina Jimenez-David

with the tepid response. When bishops tell us that "character change" is what this country needs, they are deflecting our focus from what should have been the real targets of public anger: the administration congresspersons and their political patrons.

When the bishops call on all the faithful to change their ways, they are saying the country's deteriorating political situation is everybody's fault—and therefore, nobody's.

But excuse me, I refuse to share responsibility for that railroad attempt carried out in the dead of night. Innocent bystanders have no need for an examination of conscience, except perhaps as voters for allowing the wrong people to sit in the House. But the real fault lies squarely on the shoulders of those men and women who plotted against the national interest and rode roughshod over public sensibilities.

The organizers had also wanted to transform the rally from a protest to a "thanksgiving." Thanksgiving for what? That Congress and the President finally saw the light? They only did so because their eyelids were forcibly yanked open. Thanks but no thanks—the time for a mea culpa has long passed, and today is not the time for painless, self-serving atonement.

I REALLY don't know what happened between the first, angry reactions issued by Bro. Mike Velarde of El Shaddai and Bro. Eraño Manalo of the Iglesia ni Kristo, and the staging of that rally last Sunday in Luneta.

True, Archbishop Lagdameo had been unusually swift in his denunciation of the Con-ass, questioning whether it had been truly "for the common

good." But was this enough justification for the CBCP to hijack what had been planned as a multi-sectarian, multi-faith demonstration and turn it into an exercise in pious futility?

Wasn't it rather ungracious of the organizers to decree that no politicians and non-bishops, including non-Catholic leaders, would be allowed on-stage? And that no "political" banners be displayed at the venue itself?

I mean, who called for this rally anyway? It's like a latecomer barging into party preparations and then demanding that the guest list be amended, that the décor be torn down, and that the guest of honor be excluded. Whose party was it anyway?

ONCE again, the institutional Church in this country confronted a moment to turn the tide of history and—blinked.

Commenting on the turnout at the Luneta, a friend quoted from Malcolm Gladwell's "Blink," where the author declared that when you make a snap decision, based on your experience, your knowledge and your instincts, the best option is to stay the course. It's when you start trying to explain yourself that you get bogged down in justifications and motivations. That's when you lose the momentum.

Perhaps, stunned by the wave of public indignation that they managed to catch when they reacted with all the righteous courage of biblical prophets, the Philippine bishops began to backtrack in haste. Perhaps, uncomfortable with finding their feet on the path of activism, they began to scramble for safer ground by mouthing the usual pieties.

But the bishops—and the pro-Gloria politicians—will soon find out that the simmering resentments that boiled over the other week are still around and gathering steam, and will find expression one way or the other. Whether these are manifested through the ballot or through extra-parliamentary regime change, the guardians of the status quo should realize that you thwart popular will at your peril. And redistributing blame or guilt is not the way to assuage anger that demands to be redressed.

Cultivating energy

WORLD
VIEW

Jean-Michel Severino



duce one liter of oil, whereas just 15 kilograms of plant matter are required to make one liter of synthetic fuel.

After the oil glut, with oil below \$20 a barrel, interest in developing energy from biomass ebbed, attractive only to "green" militants and those interested in fundamental science. Yet the potential is immense. The planet's biomass—forests, pastureland, savannas and crops—make up productive capital that generates a 10 percent "return" every year. Like a battery that runs out and is then recharged by the sun, this supply is renewable indefinitely, as long as it is managed properly. The annual return on this capital is currently estimated at 60 billion tons, yet only two billion tons is consumed for food purposes and 10 billion tons for energy.

Increasing the responsible use of this energy source would contribute to the fight against climate change by reducing the amount of carbon in the atmosphere and diminishing the amount of fossil fuel required to produce energy. Moreover, its abundance in southern countries promises to facilitate their economic development. Considered the "energy of the poor" until today, biomass could become a source of wealth if it is grown and harnessed with the support of the international community.

Thus, "energy crops" could be developed to produce biofuel. Residue from forest, agricultural and agro-industrial activities could be collected and

converted. For example, the six million tons of waste produced annually by Niger could theoretically be used to meet that country's entire energy needs.

However, in many places, energy cropping would certainly compete with food crops. Long-term estimates project that over a 50-year time horizon, most of the planet's arable land would have to be used to feed the world and for forest conservation. Thus, areas dedicated to energy production, particularly biofuel, may not reach the level that societies would wish. But, while such competition would reveal new global scarcities, it would also bring higher prices, thereby encouraging producers to increase yields and productivity.

Thus, while cultivating energy would create new constraints, it would also open new possibilities for many economic actors. The farmer and the forest worker could become more involved in the market, the mine engineer could begin to take an interest in crop fields, the banker in plant shares, etc. But, in order to prepare for a scaling up of energy cropping, new policies must be implemented, both in northern and southern countries, in terms of agriculture, land and water management, protection of biodiversity, fuel taxes, and information and awareness-raising.

The ancient Egyptians and the Incas practiced a religion of the Sun, believing it to be at the beginning of all life on Earth. Science has since proven this to be the case. Nowadays, when it has become more important than ever that we embrace renewable resources, we should use the Sun to cultivate our energy, just as our ancestors used it to cultivate their food.

Project Syndicate

Jean-Michel Severino, a former vice president of the World Bank, is the director general of the Agence Française de Développement (jms@afd.fr).

Saved

I BELIEVE IN ANGELS. NO, IT IS NOT THE KIND THAT HAS wings, wears a white dress and sits atop my shoulder so it can whisper in my ear. I believe in angels that can be seen by the eyes and that come into our lives in opportune times.

Angels come unannounced. You do not explicitly ask for them; neither do they come searching for you. Perhaps in moments of extreme sadness or confusion, your heart gives out a cry which draws them to you. They tell you things you need to hear or give you comfort when you are down. They can be people you sit next to on the bus, your cleaning lady, a friend you have not seen for a long time, a new waiter at your favorite restaurant or the driver of the taxi taking you to the airport. An angel can be anybody.

In my case, his name was Tommy. He used to stay in the flat where I live now. He came back to Barcelona, Spain, to attend the funeral of a classmate who had died the week before. I did not know he was coming and was surprised to see a new person in the house. I did not mind, but I felt sorry he had to stay in the living room, using the extra mattress for "guests" as his bed.

By the time he arrived, I had been in Barcelona for almost six weeks. I was swinging from being "just okay" to being completely homesick. I had not anticipated feeling this way. After all, I had been living away from home since I was nine years old, so what else was new? But I was almost always sad and I had the feeling that I should be anywhere but here. At times I cried, but I would never tell my parents how sad I could get in this foreign land.

People kept telling me that my homesickness would pass and that I would be all right. Although I knew it was true, I felt that something else was bothering me. I was feeling many things. I was missing my family and friends. I was missing the food, malls and beaches at home. I missed my school. I missed a lot of the things I took for granted in Manila.

Here I was facing the pressures of school and choosing the path I would like to follow. I was just starting to get used to the case method, and I was preparing my curriculum vitae for summer internship. I was forced to think about the choice that I would soon have to make, but did not even know I was afraid of.

My heart ached for home and I knew that I wanted to go back. I knew that I was not simply homesick. I knew that I longed for the place which moves my heart and the people who make me proud. But my head said that I had loans to pay and I should stay. Besides, a lot of people would consider me crazy if I passed up the opportunity to earn a lot of money by staying in Europe and I was afraid that they might be right.

Tommy thought otherwise. He said that when he was working in Nepal and Afghanistan, he realized how important it was for people who had the chance to study abroad to go back to their countries. He told me the story of a Nepali village that saved up money for over 20 years so they could send their brightest resident to medical school in London. He was to come back and share what he learned in the village, but he never did.

Tommy also told me about another girl from our school who was thinking of staying in Europe to work. She was intelligent, charismatic and would make a great leader in her own country. He encouraged her to go back and she did.

Tommy made me realize that I can and should go back because in my country, I can make a difference. He made me see that it is okay to be idealistic and wish to be an agent of change in a country mired in hopelessness. He encouraged me to view this phase in my life as a chance to develop myself, and, perhaps, become a little bit better than when I arrived in Barcelona. This would prepare me for the things I have to face two years from today.

I have no messianic complex and I certainly do not think that what I want to do with my life is great. I am simply being selfish in wishing to be where I will be most happy and useful. Tommy helped me realize that all I needed to know was my purpose for being here and to remember it. With this knowledge, I could endure anything and sacrifice everything.

I was saved. Saved by the knowledge that I can choose what I want to do, even if it does not make sense, because it will make me happy.

Tommy has since left to continue with his job hunting, but I am keeping his poster of an Ethiopian girl as souvenir. He rescued it from a United Nations office in Iraq right before people came to loot the place. It is a special poster from a special person. I do not know if I will meet him again, so I want to remember that once upon a time, when I needed someone most, an angel showed up to rescue me from despair.

JMD, 28, is studying at the IESE Business School (University of Navarra) in Barcelona, Spain.

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THEY SAID

Character change

"We need more importantly and more urgently this educative and moral character change. Call it repentance from sin, reform of morals, renewal of values. All of these, and the nation will rise with hope, right vision and confidence."

—Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines president, during the Church-led prayer rally of thanksgiving at the Luneta

Letting terrorism win

"The non-event this year also shows that current Asean leaders are not as strong as their predecessor. Indeed, by backing down this year, Asean has shown that it will cave in to terrorism. It is ironic because one of Asean's projects is tighter cooperation among its 10 leaders to fight terrorism."

—Thang D. Nguyen, columnist of Thailand's daily "The Nation," on the postponement of the 12th Asean summit in Cebu

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Women empowerment stands for truth, decency

AN EMPOWERED WOMAN IS WORTHY of emulation. I admire women who can speak their minds bravely, whatever the risks to their self-interests or safety.

Women empowerment manifests in the courage to stand up for truth and decency in the face of powerful evil forces. It is the kind of courage exhibited by the congresswomen of the opposition as they forged their hearts, minds and voices with those of their male counterparts in opposing the tyranny of the majority that showed no shame in violating no less than our Constitution.

Women empowerment consists in speaking with a clear mind, convincing logic, forceful truth and pure heart. Empowerment aims to enlighten, educate, lead and inspire. Empowerment breathes in the style that Party-list Rep. Riza Hontiveros Baraquel performs her

legislative duties and carries herself both in the halls of Congress and in the parliament of the streets. (I wish the country has more lady counterparts for Reps. Allan Peter Cayetano and Chiz Escudero.)

Women empowerment does not show in the lame "I am sorry" classic unpresidential speech of a woman president; or in the "I spit at the Chief Justice" vituperation of a woman senator. These two privileged members of the woman species have enough power to carry them around. My Christmas wish for the country is that they exercise their woman and human power in a manner that inspire Filipinos, not plunge the nation deeper into the pit of despair.

—**MA. GRACIA DE V. RIÑOZA-PLAZO**,
62 Katipunan Ave. Ext.,
Loyola Grand Villas,
Quezon City

Japanese aid linked to human rights

REGARDING YOUR ARTICLE TITLED "NO direct link between aid and human rights—Japanese exec" (PDI, 12/9/06), I wish to clarify the position of the Japanese government on the issue of human rights and Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA).

Japan has been monitoring the human rights situation in the Philippines very closely. Japan's keen interest on the Philippines' human rights situation has been communicated to the Philippine government during various occasions, including the Japan-Philippines summit meeting held last Dec. 9 between Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The Japan-Philippines Joint Statement, which was signed by the two leaders right after their summit meeting, states that "the two leaders emphasized the importance of sustaining harmony,

upholding democratic values and protecting human rights, as well as preserving the environment and social well-being with respect to general governance and to the implementation of the official development assistance."

Japan's ODA assistance is guided by its ODA Charter. The ODA Charter stipulates that human rights situation will be taken into consideration together with various other elements, such as trends in military expenditure, development of weapons of mass destruction and missiles, environment, democratization, etc., in making a comprehensive decision for the provision of ODA. In considering future ODA to the Philippines, the Japanese government will continue to be guided by its ODA Charter.

—**HIROSHI SUZUKI**,
deputy cabinet secretary
for public relations,
Government of Japan

LETTERS

Sy denies going into power project with Aussie partners

THIS IS WITH REFERENCE TO THE DEC. 1 column of Victor Agustin, specifically, that portion in "Heard through the grapevine" where he wrote that I am going into power generation (a 150-megawatt geothermal plant in Pasil, Kalinga-Apayao) in partnership with an Australian group.

With due respect, I would like to categorically state that, at present, neither I nor any member of my family has any interest or business venture related to power generation.

Likewise, I would like to specifically deny that I have ever entered into any partnership agreement with an Australian group regarding a certain 150-MW geothermal plant in Pasil, Kalinga-Apayao.

—**HENRY SY SR.**, chair,
SM Investments Corporation,
SM Central Business Park,
Bay City, Pasay City

The last bargaining chips of Filipinos

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW ONCE SAID: "Democracy substitutes election by the incompetent many for appointment by the corrupt few." Is this what has happened to us? It's bad enough that thousands upon thousands of skilled medical personnel have to seek employment outside of the Philippines because of economic needs.

In the same manner, it is sad to see that the country seems to be unable to recover from calamities that have occurred in what seems like almost unrelenting regularity. One can say, though that these two problems have roots that may be beyond the immediate control of those in government today.

But when those in Congress try to push Charter change through glaringly evident manipulation, they themselves are destroying the republic's credibility. Sadly, all this is happening at a time when human resource and good faith are the last remaining bargaining chips of Filipinos.

—**LEOPOLDO D. BALAYON JR.**,
boy_balayonjr@yahoo.com



SPEAKER Jose de Venecia explains the House decision to drop the proposal to convene a constituent assembly at a press conference in Makati.

Resignation is the only honorable option

SPEAKER JOSE DE VENECIA SHOULD show everybody that he is really sincere in his desire to serve the Filipino people. From the very start, he made it appear that he was willing to move heaven and earth to push through with the constitutional assembly because, he was telling everybody, we needed to immediately change the Constitution to attain the development we wanted.

His announcement that he and his pro-Con-ass allies have decided to archive Con-ass clearly indicated that all along their primary concern was to protect their political interests. If they really believed that what they were doing was right and would serve the best interest of the Filipino people, they should have stood their ground. They should have refused to

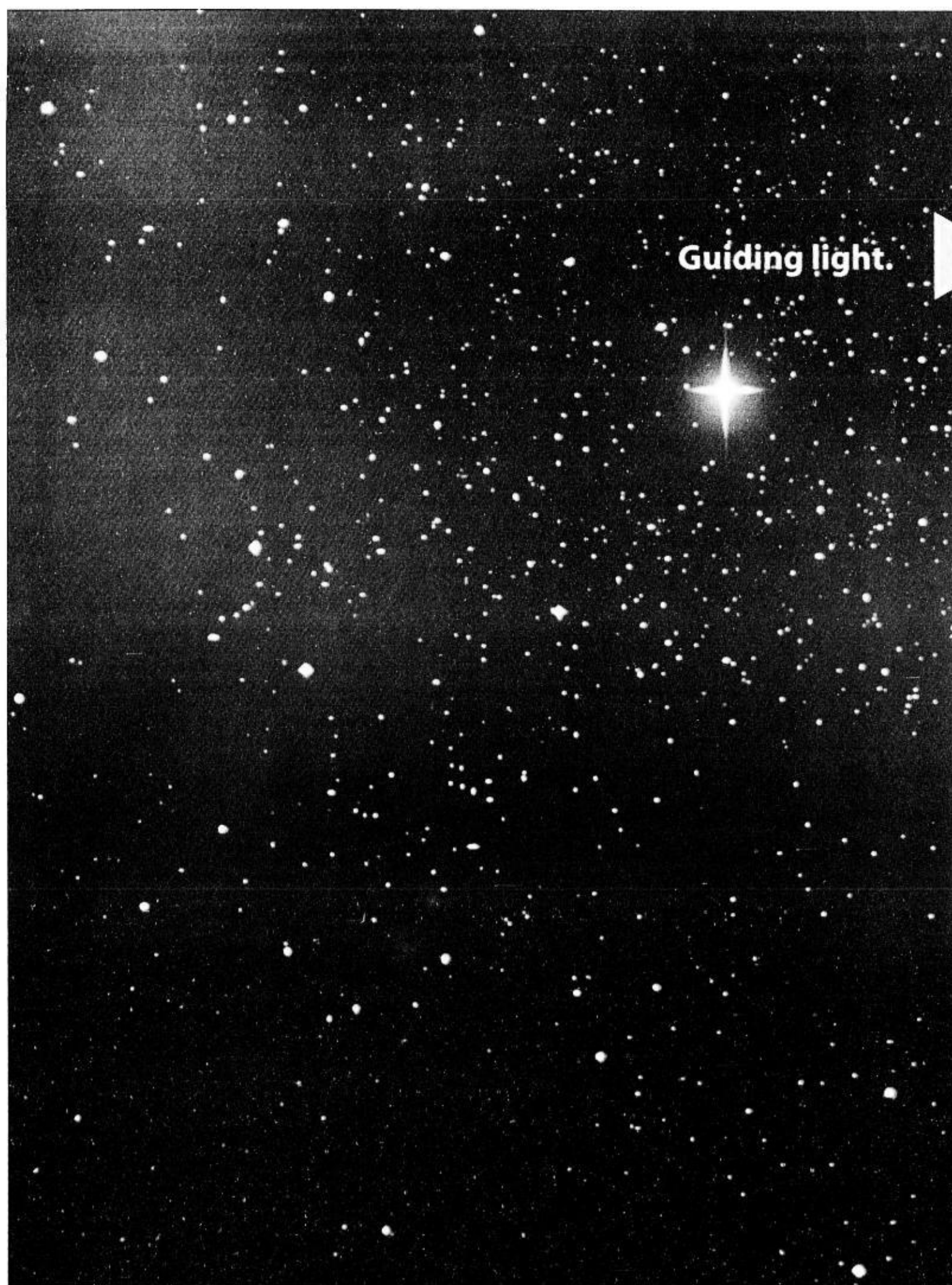
yield to external pressure, never mind that it was widespread and popular. They should have insisted on what they believed in, even if they had to make a political sacrifice by resigning, if only to show they were sincere and had no other motives but to serve our people. I'm sure they would have earned the priceless admiration and respect of our people.

But they stepped back—to save their hide. In other countries where dignity and honor are given premium, such a shameful and embarrassing act would, just the same, be a cause for resignation. If the congressmen have any dignity and self-respect left in them, they should resign.

—**RUEL ALMONEDA**,
ruelsa@lycos.com

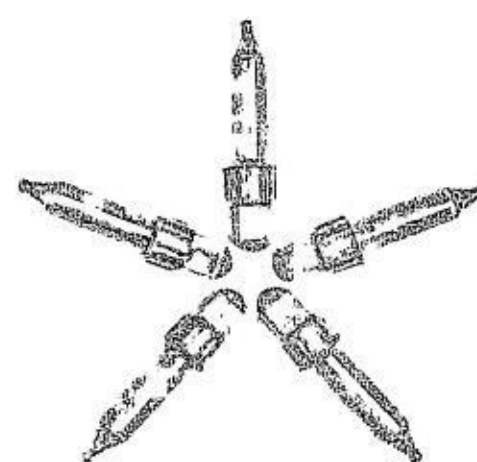
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Guiding light.

This Christmas season, despite the many lights around us, may we always look to that light that leads us home.



Maliwanag ang Pasko.



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Across the NATION

US war veterans' kids seek recognition

By Ven S. Labro
Inquirer Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN Rights regional office here recently endorsed to the US ambassador a petition of a group asking that they be recognized by the US government as abandoned children of American soldiers during World War II.

The members of the World War II Leyte Gulf Landing Amerasians Organization also said they were excluded from the benefits of US Public Law

97-359, otherwise known as Amerasians Immigration Act of 1982.

This law gave due recognition to offspring of US servicemen in Thai-

land, Korea, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, who were allowed to immigrate to the United States and were placed in the care of financially responsible American families.

"Recognizing their basic human rights to live decent lives and to have full identities, we are bringing this matter through your attention for appropriate action," CHR regional director Paquito Nacino said in his endorsement of the petition of the group to US ambassador Kristie Kenney.

The group said in their petition

that they were "once again craving (for) the attention of the United States Government to kindly fulfill its moral and social obligations to us being sons and daughters of American soldiers during WWII."

They claimed that all through their lives they had "suffered difficulties like starvation and lack of education considering the sad plight and misfortune inflicted to (sic) our poor mothers after the war."

But Albert Proctor, the 60-year-old president of the group, said the group does not blame anybody, especially

their fathers, for their predicament.

What they want, he added, was recognition as sons and daughters of soldiers who were then citizens and under the service of the United States.

"Our fathers would not have come here and met out mothers if not sent by the US government," he said.

He admitted, though, that when he was still young the US government helped them in their studies "through the Philippine American Guardian Association, whose program was implemented by the

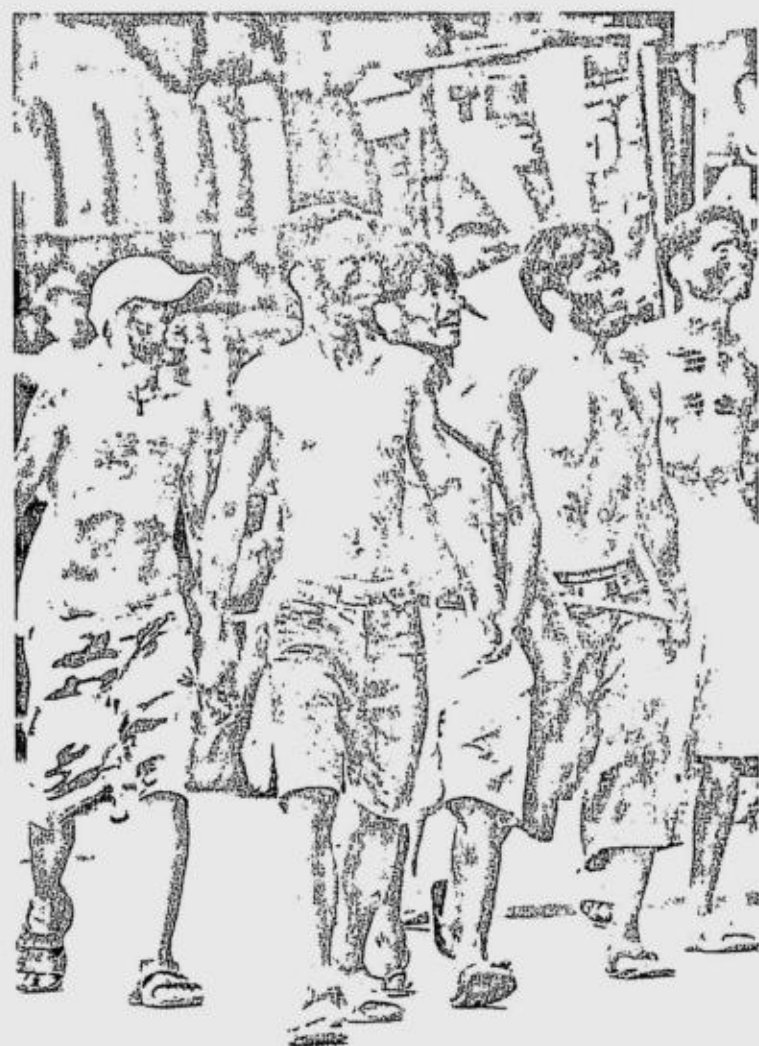
Philippine National Red Cross."

According to Proctor, they received an educational support of P7 every month while still in elementary and P15 a month when they reached high school.

This was in the 1950s and the 1960s.

This support, however, was stopped for unknown reasons sometime in the early 1960s when Proctor was already in second year high school.

"What we received was only a small benefit," he said.



TRIBAL CAROL

A group of male members of the Matigsalug Tribe roams Davao City to raise money by caroling. The group was also seen soliciting used clothes from residents generous enough to donate goods to the tribesmen.

BING GONZALES/INQUIRER MINDANAO

Solon expresses no remorse over his support for Con-ass

By Alex Pal
Inquirer Visayas

DUMAGUETE CITY—Unlike his counterpart from Cebu City, Negros Oriental second district Rep. Emilio Macias II expressed no remorse over his support for the move to convene the House of Representatives into a constituent assembly to change the Constitution.

"I have nothing to be ashamed of," Macias said in a telephone interview.

He said he supported the proposal because he believed that there was a need for change.

Last week, Cebu City south district Rep. Antonio Cuenco apologized to his constituents for supporting the move to revise the Constitution through a constituent assembly.

Cuenco said he merely went with the House majority in passing the resolution to



A WOMAN holds her candle as she joined thousands of protesters during a Roman Catholic Church-led prayer rally against a plan by pro-administration lawmakers to change the Constitution at the Rizal Park on Sunday, Dec. 17, 2006.

NINO JESUS ORBET/INQUIRER SOUTHERN LUZON

convene a constitutional assembly with or without the Senate. "No matter how we argue, the House made a mistake at that time," he said.

The decision to convene a constituent assembly sparked nationwide protests from multi-sectoral groups led by Church-based groups like the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines and the El Shaddai, forcing the lawmakers to drop the resolution in favor of a constitution convention.

But Macias said the action of the House was justifiable. "We should have faced the music because we could explain it. We were not wrong but it looked

like the House leadership [backed] out."

Macias is a member of the Nationalist People's Coalition of businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco who is aligned with the House majority. He, along with Representatives Jacinto Paras and Herminio Teves of the 1st and 3rd districts of Negros Oriental, voted for the constituent assembly proposal.

"I was convinced to vote for the Con-ass because there is a need for a change (sic). There are three modes of changing the Constitution. One is through a people's initiative but I never believed in that. Another is through a constitutional convention which is too costly, expensive and time consuming," he said.

According to Macias, the constituent assembly is the fastest, most convenient and direct way of changing the Constitution to remove provisions that proponents said are blocking the country's path to progress.

If the House will wait for the Senate to amend the Constitution, both chambers of Congress would never come to an agreement, he added.

"There is a need for a unicameral legislature. If the legislature and executive are working together, progress is faster," Macias



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New realty tax rates in Batangas junked in CA

BATANGAS CITY—THE COURT OF Appeals (CA) Third Division has dismissed the provincial government's petition for review of the Department of Justice (DOJ) decision made on June 1, which voided the province's amended tax ordinance. Lawyer Dennis Macatangay, provincial legal counsel, however, said they would submit another appeal to beat the court's Dec. 21 deadline to submit additional documents on the case.

In a three-page resolution penned last Nov. 7, a copy of which was handed to INQUIRER, CA Associate Justice Arangelita Lontok said the court denied the petition after the provincial government failed to present pleadings and documents required by the Philippine Rules of Civil Procedure.

The law states that petitions for review shall "be accompanied by a clearly legible duplicate original or a certified true copy of the award, judgment final order or resolution appealed from, together with certified true copies of such material portions of the record referred to therein and other supporting papers."

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez nullified in his June 1 resolution the amendments made to Provincial Tax Ordinance No. 05, known as "Province of Batangas 2004 Schedule of Fair Market Value General Revisions of Real Property Assessment" for being "in contravention of law."

The ordinance, which took effect on Dec. 8 last year, raised the fair market value per square meter of pieces of real estate property in Batangas.

"It is noteworthy that the appellant Jaka Investments Corporation was joined by no less than the secretary of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan of the province of Batangas when it attested that no public hearings or consultations were done to comply with the requirements of the law," Gonzalez said.

He also said neither was the ordinance included in any session, committee hearing and calendar of businesses of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan. Marlon Alexander Luistro, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Mt. Province pols feud over P100M

BAGUIO CITY—THE TOP TWO politicians of Mt. Province are feuding over the use of a P100-million fund for the installation of guardrails along and widening of the Halsema Highway from Mt. Data in Bauko town to the capital Bontoc.

The fund is part of the P2-billion rehabilitation of Halsema Highway from Mt. Province to Ifugao.

Gov. Maximo Dalog wrote President Macapagal-Arroyo, who is expected to inaugurate the project on Dec. 27, that the fund should be used instead for the concreting of some sections of the

road instead of using it for the guardrails and widening.

"Madam President, we humbly and respectfully appeal to your good office to please direct the DPWH (Department of Public Works and Highway) to cause the reprogramming of the funds to concreting works," Dalog said in a letter last month.

"This manner of implementation is perceived to be beneficial for a few who are motivated by profit and not for the commuters and riding public," he said.

Mt. Province Rep. Victor Dominguez pushed the original program of work.

Contractor Harry Dominguez, former mayor of Tadian town and Dominguez's nephew, wrote Ms. Arroyo on Dec. 11 to ask her to junk Dalog's proposal.

"[Dalog] insists that concreting of the national road must be the priority of DPWH. But how impractical could the governor be, and so inconsiderate, to disregard the technical expertise of the DPWH people and the national roads specifications and standards in compliance to (sic) Your Excellency's directives for appropriate widening before concrete paving," Harry Dominguez said.

"I believe you are aware of the

terrain, curves and slopes affecting the narrow portions of Halsema Highway specifically the Mt. Province-Ifugao section. Concrete paving of the road cannot be pursued without first complying with the required minimum width for a safe two-way traffic," Dominguez told reporters here last week.

Phases II and III of the Halsema rehabilitation project from Mt. Data to Bontoc, and Bontoc to Banaue, Ifugao, are part of the DPWH's national road improvement program funded by a World Bank loan. The project would be implemented in early 2007.

The first phase of the rehabili-

tation, which covers the Benguet side, has been completed and costs about P1.2 billion.

In her State of the Nation Address this year, Ms. Arroyo said the rehabilitation of Halsema was a personal crusade.

"My father (the late President Diosdado Macapagal) built the Halsema Highway from Baguio to Bontoc, and the Bagabag airport in Nueva Vizcaya to access the Ifugao rice terraces ... We have rehabilitated the Baguio to Mt. Data leg of the highway and the rest of Halsema will now follow," she said. Frank Cimatu, Inquirer Northern Luzon

Cholera makes presence felt in Camarines

MINALABAC, CAMARINES SUR—Three cases of cholera have been confirmed by health authorities here amid an outbreak of diarrhea that downed at least 70 persons in Barangay Hamorawon of this town.

Dr. Flavell Florenda, municipal health officer, revealed on Monday the confirmation of the three cases of cholera that, she said, was the result of the culture of fecal swab in the laboratory of the Bicol Medical Center (BMC).

Florenda said on Tuesday this week they awaited more results of made by the Camarines Sur provincial health team that went to the area in response to reports of rising cases of diarrhea in Hamorawon.

She said only six fecal swabs were collected from six different persons with symptoms of cholera, which included discharge of watery feces colored like rice washing.

Florenda added that a person infected with cholera also suffers from fever, vomiting and abdominal pains.

She said cholera kills by weakening a person's defenses because of excessive dehydration beyond the tolerable level caused by continuous bowel movement.

She added that a person moving one's bowel 10 times a day is in danger of dying from dehydration.

Florenda said the first reported victim died at the BMC the day Super typhoon Reming hit Camarines Sur. Juan Escandor Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon



IN THE DARK

Protesters in Davao City light candles during Sunday's prayer rally, calling for the scrapping of President Macapagal-Arroyo's bid for Charter change.

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Gov't urged to declare birthday of Ilonggo patriot nat'l holiday

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—HISTORIANS ARE CALLING FOR the declaration of Dec. 18 as a national holiday in honor of Ilonggo patriot Dr. Graciano Lopez Jaena.

Ludovico Badoy, executive director of the National Historical Institute, said the institute would recommend to President Macapagal-Arroyo the declaration of the birthday of Lopez Jaena as a holiday in the whole country, not just in Iloilo.

Badoy said lawmakers, especially those from Panay Island, should also pass a law declaring the national holiday.

Lopez Jaena was honored yesterday in rites commemorating his 150th birth anniversary.

Historians, local officials, students, teachers and government employees attended the ceremony held at the Graciano Lopez Jaena Park (formerly the Jaro Plaza). His great-grand niece Grace Espina represented Lopez Jaena's family.

Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor, who represented the President, led the wreath laying ceremony along with government officials and representatives of the NHI, Department of Education, Western Visayas Historical and Cultural Council and the Graciano Lopez Jaena Foundation Inc.

Historians have pointed out that Lopez Jaena, a distinguished orator and journalist, deserves the same recognition as Jose Rizal and Marcelo del Pilar as part of the "great triumvirate of the Propa-

ganda Movement," against Spanish colonial rule.

Lopez Jaena founded the fortnightly newspaper La Solidaridad, the publication of the Propaganda Movement, and was well known for his writings espousing freedom from Spanish rule.

At the age of 18, he published his first written work "Fray Botod" (Big Bellied Friar), which depicted the abuses and extreme greediness of the Spanish friars.

He was more distinguished as an orator and dubbed the "Demosthenes of the Philippines." Spanish authorities feared him most for his speeches, which roused his audience and convinced listeners to believe in his cause.

His firmness in principle and nobility of ideals live up to this day.

Regino Paular, chief of the NHI historical education division, said Lopez Jaena is a good model for the Filipino youth on the importance of standing up for the truth and of being a critical observer of what is going on in the country.

Paular noted that Lopez Jaena's oratorical pieces and articles advocated socio-political reforms in the country during Spanish colonial rule.

He said it is important to broaden the historical awareness of the people especially the youth. "History offers lessons for everybody. But it seems we are doing it again like how graft and corruption is continuing," he said.

Msgr. Joemarie Delgado said Lopez Jaena's heroism is relevant to the current times.



RICHEST MAN'S HELP

Taipan Lucio Tan (center) and wife Carmen (left) hand over blankets to poor residents of Daraga, Albay whose homes were either swept away or buried by massive mudslides from Mayon Volcano. Conducted under the auspices of the Tzu Chi Foundation, the relief mission distributed rice, plastic mats, mosquito nets, detergents, slippers, kitchen utensils, coolware and pails, while a 27-man medical team provided free medical services and medicines to affected residents. The Tan couple is among the major benefactors and volunteers of Tzu Chi Foundation, a Taiwan-based international relief and humanitarian aid organization with presence in 40 countries.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Breach of Ilocos hospital rules shakes board

By Cristina Arzadon
Inquirer Northern Luzon

LAOAG CITY—THE PROVINCIAL board sought to correct lapses in the admission of patients in government hospitals after it established a breach in procedures last month when Mayor Michael Fariñas was admitted for treatment of a self-inflicted injury.

The board's committee on laws looked into Fariñas' confinement at the Gov. Roque Ablan Sr. Memorial Provincial Hospital on Nov. 3, citing findings of a hospital committee that regulations were disregarded when the mayor's private doctor took him there for treatment.

Fariñas accidentally shot himself and lost two toes when he tripped on his baby Armalite rifle while he was boarding his van.

In a report on Nov. 20, the hospital committee found that Fariñas' doctor, Francis Dacuyuy, "committed complete disregard of hospital rules and bypassed hospital personnel on duty when [he took] the mayor [to the hospital] through the backdoor and performed emergency operation on him."

The four-member committee also took note of the following:

- After Fariñas' operation, Dacuyuy refused to have his patient taken to the post-anesthesia care unit (Pacu) and instead took him immediately to his room of choice.

- The doctor filled up clinical forms without the knowledge of the emergency room personnel and the admitting nurse.

- He told the ward nurse not to inform senior nurses and warned not to allow the supervising nurses to visit the mayor.

"[Dr. Dacuyuy] put [the mayor] more at risk by not submitting him to the emergency room [because] his patient was bleeding for an undetermined injury," the report said.

"[Shortcutting the procedure] gave more harm than

good to his patient by disregarding the ABCs (airway, breathing, circulation) of life," it added.

Dacuyuy did not show up during the committee's hearing on Nov. 30.

But in an earlier letter to Dr. Roger Bracerros, chief of the provincial hospital, Dacuyuy said he was taking full responsibility for the actions taken during the time that Fariñas was admitted.

Dacuyuy said Fariñas asked him that his condition be kept from the public to minimize attention.

"Extraordinary situations demand extraordinary effort especially when the highest official of the city is at risk. I acted in the best manner I could to protect the interest of my patient," Dacuyuy said.

Bracerros said he would leave the matter to the provincial government to decide on what actions and sanctions to be adopted.

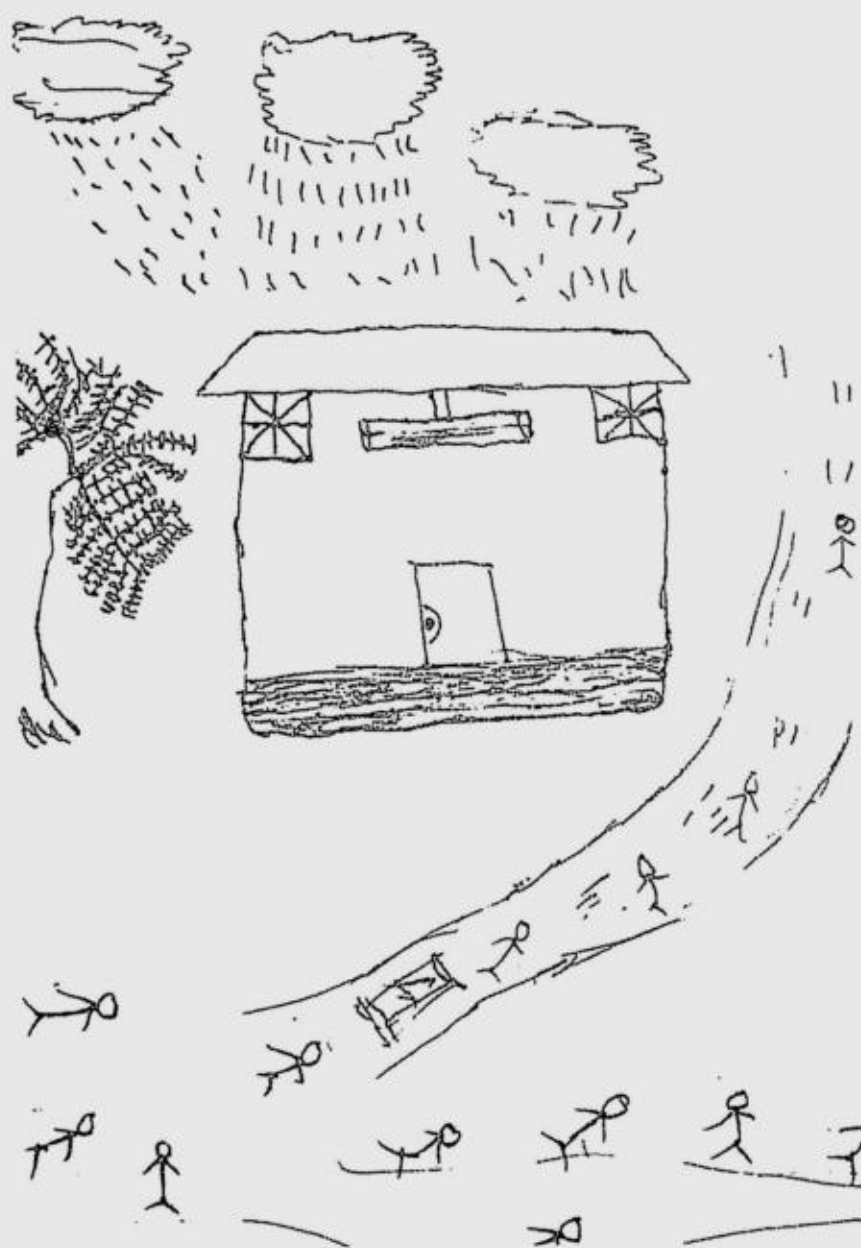
Board Member Vicentito Lazo said the board wanted to ensure that hospital regulations should apply to all patients regardless of stature in life.

Board Member Da Vinci Crisostomo said the committee would recommend that hospitals should institutionalize the issuance of medical bulletins when patients admitted are public officials.

"We must adopt this system [of issuing medical bulletins] so that the public will know the health condition of public officials, more so when they are occupying high positions in government," he said.

ONE OF the drawings of children of their recollection of Supertyphoon Reming's wrath in their communities. This and other drawings were made by children in evacuation centers around Albay where victims of Reming took shelter after losing homes and pieces of property to mudflows and floods. The process of rehabilitation is slow and the children have yet to return to their normal lives before the typhoon struck and destroyed houses and schools.

JOANNA LOS
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Albay gets water purifying machine

LEGAZPI CITY—CLEAN WATER.

This could be the freshest gift Albay could get as the Spanish government donated a P26 million water purifying machine to the province that was hardest hit by Supertyphoon Reming.

The machine could produce 3,000 liters of purified water per hour and was set up in Guinobatan town.

It was brought by a Hercules cargo plane at the Legazpi City Airport.

Ma. Eugenia Martin-Sanz

Martinez, head of the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation's (Saic) relief department, led a nine-man Spanish team of relief and medical workers helping victims of Reming in the province cope with diseases and lack of potable water.

Martinez said her group might build a new hospital in Ligao City in place of the district hospital in the area which was destroyed by Reming.

Saic has already poured in

some P68 million in aid to Albay.

Albay Gov. Fernando Gonzales, a Spanish mestizo, expressed gratitude to Saic on behalf of the province.

"The Spanish government's sincere show of concern ... through its spontaneous response ... is a strong manifestation of a deep-rooted brotherhood between the Spaniards and the Filipinos," said the governor. Ephraim Aguilar, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Execs study ban on vessels not seaworthy in Davao Gulf

DAVAO CITY—OFFICIALS here are out to ban poorly maintained vessels from entering the Davao Gulf to protect it from oil spills that could endanger the habitat of one of the most diverse marine lives in Asia.

Councilor Leonardo Avila, chair of the Davao Gulf Management Council (DGMCC), said the Davao Gulf Council would strengthen the capability of law enforcers to ensure that only vessels in top conditions are allowed entry into the Davao Gulf to prevent an oil spill like that of Petron's tanker near Guimaras.



Fishing ground

The gulf, bounded by four provinces, 18 towns and five cities, has been a major fishing ground for close to 20,000 commercial fishermen.

While it is also home to 10 species of whales, marine turtles, whale sharks and other forms of marine life, its being a major route of international and local vessels make it vulnerable to oil spills.

"How can we prevent these things from happening?" asked Mayor Rogelio Antalan of the Island Garden City of Samal.

"Can we ensure that those ships coming here are seaworthy to prevent untoward incidents from hap-

pening? Our country has been full of accidents just waiting to happen," said Antalan, who also sits in the DGMCC.

Ban vessels

Avila said local officials in areas surrounding the gulf should ban vessels that are not seaworthy from entering the gulf.

The shipping company responsible for the oil spill in Guimaras was earlier found to have expired licenses.

The DGMCC is coordinating with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Philippines and the Hong Kong Shanghai Bank Corporation (HSBC) in coming up with an Environmental Sensitivity Index (ESI) that would identify which parts of the Davao Gulf are environmentally endangered.

Protection

"The ESI mapping is just the beginning of the protection of the gulf," said WWF Philippines president Jose Lorenzo Tan.

Margie Moran-Florendo, DGMCC secretary general, said the ESI would provide a data base to serve as a basis for decision making and actions by local officials. Germelina Lacorte, Inquirer Mindanao

"... Our country has been full of accidents' just waiting to happen ..."

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RP needs P50B for typhoon rehab

By Cynthia D. Balana

THE COUNTRY WOULD NEED AT LEAST P50 billion, or \$1.01 billion, to rehabilitate communities, rebuild infrastructure and replace crops destroyed by the last four typhoons that struck the country, Social Welfare and Development Secretary Esperanza Cabral said yesterday.

Speaking after the launch of "Philippines 2006 Typhoon Appeal" at the Renaissance Hotel in Quezon City, Cabral said the amount needed for rehabilitation work could actually be higher since the \$1.01 billion figure quoted by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), only represented the actual damage. She said Nileema Noble, UN

resident coordinator for the Philippines, had based the \$1.01 billion from consolidated figures submitted by the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC).

Cabral said the fund-raising was for the rehabilitation of areas hit by typhoons "Paeng," "Milenyo," "Reming" and "Seniang."

She said at least \$46 million (P2.2 billion) was needed for the

rehabilitation and replacement of crops for the last typhoon alone.

"It became clear this afternoon after the launch that we needed to coordinate our efforts," Cabral said. "We should have a clearing house of all the resources that are being brought to bear on the disaster, including money, goods, personnel and equipment."

At least 1,850 people were dead or missing.

"We're short of funds and whatever resources we had to cope with disasters had been depleted by four successive strong typhoons during the last three months," she said.

Around 120,000 people are still in evacuation centers in Albay after their homes were destroyed.

Meanwhile, the International Organization for Migration do-

nated \$250,000 (P12.4 million) in immediate aid for victims of typhoon Reming in the Bicol region and announced plans to solicit \$6 million (P295 million) more to provide relief for 95,000 internally displaced people in the region.

IOM's Manila office yesterday said it had set up a hub in Legaspi City for the delivery of emergency shelter and non-food items to an estimated 5,000 families in the hardest hit provinces.

Also yesterday, the Department of Foreign Affairs said the Guam-based Ayuda Foundation donated a total of 20 pallets of non-perishable relief goods for Reming victims, to be shipped free-of-charge to Manila next weekend courtesy of Continental Airlines. With Volt Contreras and Reuters



FIONA Gaufo, 3, takes shelter under a half-buried tricycle in Barangay Padang, Legazpi City, while her parents look for food. Elder sister Kyle, 4, died at the height of typhoon "Reming."

ERNIE U. SARMENTO

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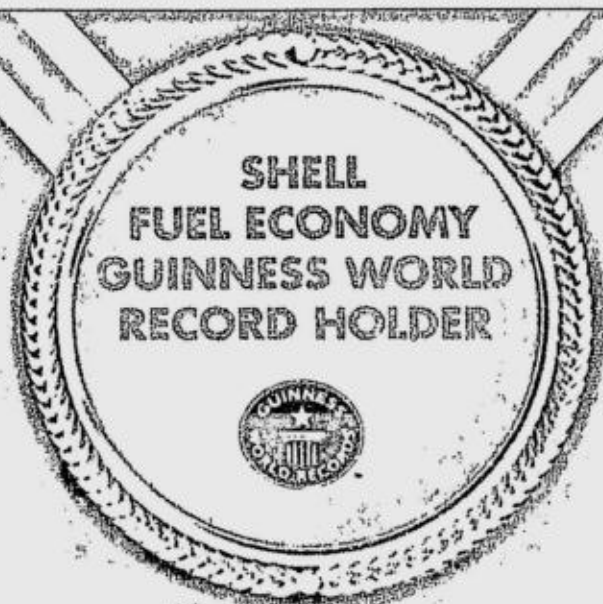
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Reckoning with the law of karma

THE CROWD AT THE LUNETETA that the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) called to send a message to President Macapagal-Arroyo that the bishops have had enough of this administration's unresolved issues was pooh-poohed as a small crowd.

Crowd estimates ranged from 15,000 to 30,000, hardly enough to make this government worry.

But if history repeats itself, the gathering at the Luneta Sunday signaled the beginning of the end of the Arroyo administration.

The crowds that attended rallies in the wake of the assassination of former Sen. Benigno

Aquino Jr. were small at first. They became bigger, culminating in EDSA I in February 1986.

ON TARGET



Ramon Tulfo

What the Luneta crowd lacked in numbers, it made up for in the quality of its participants. Religious leaders and members of the middle class—people in business, professionals and students—were there.

The Luneta crowd lacked the bulk because there were very few members of the C-D-E group, the lower-middle and the lower class. But then these people will eventually follow their leaders who belong to the intellectual or middle class. The middle or intellectual class

may lack the numbers to elect presidents, but then it leads in toppling abusive regimes in this country. The crowds at EDSA I and EDSA II were spearheaded by the middle class.

You reap what you sow. Such is the universal law of karma.

Ms Arroyo plotted the overthrow of President Erap by meeting with his generals. Yes, she might have had a good reason for taking part in the plot to overthrow Erap. But then, she was Erap's secretary of social welfare and development.

When some of GMA's Cabinet members plotted to oust her at the height of the "Hello Garci" scandal, that was just a preview of what would happen to her for doing the same thing to Erap. What goes around comes around.

However, I would be happy to be proved wrong.

I'm a firm believer in karma. Many years ago, when I was young and reckless, my friends and I beat up a drunk who just happened to cross our path.

Three years later, while I was waiting for a ride home, some drunks picked me out from a crowd also waiting for a ride. Four people beat me up.

Was it any coincidence that I was assaulted in the vicinity of the place where my friends and I beat up the drunken man three years earlier? And was it any coincidence that all of my friends suffered the same fate that I had on different occasions?

No karmic debt in this world ever goes unpaid.

Binondo artifacts safe

By Tina G. Santos

THE MANILA GOVERNMENT yesterday directed city officials to immediately secure Plaza Cervantes in Binondo following the discovery in the area of what appeared to be centuries-old artifacts from the Spanish era.

Mayor Lito Atienza said a pipe-laying crew of water concessionaire Maynilad Water Services found portions of a cobblestone street beneath the plaza a few days ago.

He said cobblestones are considered rare and considered to have priceless historical value.

Atienza immediately instructed city engineer Armand Andres and Museo ng Maynila officer in charge Monina Santiago to coordinate with the National Historical Institute "to ensure that not a single piece of what would be a precious legacy is damaged or pilfered."

He noted that the City of Manila is one of the country's most important seats of the pre-Hispanic and Spanish eras.

It hosts the Walled City of Intramuros, a Parian gate and several old churches, including the Manila Cathedral and San Agustin Church.

Court stops Binay ...

From page A17

in City Hall while his lawyers went to the CA which subsequently issued a 60-day TRO.

"Like in boxing, we have won round one. I hope there won't be a round two. But if there is a round two, I hope I can count on your support," Binay had told his cheering supporters after the issuance of the TRO.

"Wherefore, the application for preliminary injunction is granted. Let a writ of preliminary injunction be issued upon petitioners' posting of bond, and this Court's approval thereof, in the sum of P500,000 each ... enjoining respondents, their agents or anybody acting in their behalf, from implementing or causing the implementation or continued implementation of the order of preventive suspension ... and from proceeding with the investigation in O.P. Case No. 06-H-305, with respect to petitioners Binay and (Vice Mayor Ernesto) Mercado ..." the resolution stated.

Apart from Binay, also covered by the CA ruling were Mercado, Councilors Jejomar Erwin Binay Jr., Ferdinand Eusebio, Erlinda Gonzalez, Ricardo Javier, Enrico Puno, Monique Lagdameo, Romeo Medina, Ernesto Aspillaga, Israel Cruzado, Elias Tolentino, Divina Jacome, Romana Pangilinan, Nelson Pasia Jr., Rodolfo Sese, and Christine Mercado.

The issuance of the preliminary injunction on the preventive suspension order against the petitioners, according to the CA, is necessary in order not to render its proceedings on the case worthless.

"To allow the implementation of the questioned preventive suspension order pending the determination of the propriety of its issuance, and giving public respondents an imprimatur to proceed with the questioned investigation, would render the petitions and our resolution thereto, even the whole processes and proceedings thereon, nugatory," the CA said.

The court added that the purpose of a preliminary injunction is to preserve the status quo until the merits of the case can be fully heard.

Binay and his allies had asked the CA to nullify the administrative complaint against them on the ground that it was unverified and filed in the wrong forum, in violation of Section 61 of the Local Government Code.

They added that the suspension had no basis since the interior department should have dismissed the case instead of forwarding it to Malacañang.

The petitioners argued that Brillante's complaint was lacking in substance as he failed to name the alleged ghost employees.

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DID YOU KNOW

CAMP Aguinaldo in Quezon City, the general headquarters of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, was called Camp Murphy when it was established on Jan. 11, 1935, after Frank Murphy, the last American governor general in the country. It was renamed after Emilio Aguinaldo, the first Philippine president, in June 1965 by virtue of Republic Act 4434.

The camp has a total land area of 178 hectares, housing more than 5,000 personnel. Camp Aguinaldo is also the home of the Department of National Defense and the National Defense College of the Philippines.

Cyril L. Bonabente, Inquirer Research

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ADV

North Korea talks resume after nuclear bomb test

BEIJING—NORTH KOREA SHOWED NO sign of compromise as crucial nuclear disarmament talks resumed Monday in Beijing, two months after the reclusive nation conducted its first atomic weapons test.

Top envoys from the six nations—host China, the two Koreas, the United States, Japan and Russia—gathered here for the first time in 13 months but Pyongyang gave no indication it was prepared to abandon its ambitions.

In his opening speech to the forum, its envoy Kim Kye-Gwan repeated a list of his nation's long-standing demands and said Pyongyang was "satisfied" with having nuclear weapons, a South Korean official told reporters.

"They (North Koreans) presented a maximum list of their demands. It was like a summary of all of their previous demands," the official said.

"The gist was that they would be able to dismantle nuclear weapons only after the United States dropped what they think is a hostile policy."

North Korea pulled out of the talks in November last year in protest at US financial sanctions imposed against it, then stunned the world with its first ever nuclear test on Oct. 9.

Kim said after arriving in Beijing on Saturday that Pyongyang's decision to go nuclear was because of the "hostile" US policy against it.

"The nuclear issues cannot be resolved until the United States takes a co-existence policy," Kim said. "I'm not optimistic about prospects for the six-party talks."

In his opening remarks, Chinese envoy Wu Dawei said the top priority this week was to discuss a deal struck in September last year in which North Korea agreed to give up its nuclear program in exchange for security guarantees, energy benefits and other aid.

"The issues that we will discuss at the talks are of a profound and complicated nature," Wu said.

The chief US envoy to the talks, Christopher Hill, also said ahead of the start of negotiations that the United States would push for a North Korea to recommit to the September agreement.

"What the DPRK (North Korea) needs to do is to get serious with denuclearization," Hill said.

"If they get serious with denuclearization, a lot of good things can happen... if they do not get serious about denuclearization, such things will go away." According to South Korean media reports, the United States has offered the North another security guarantee signed by President George W. Bush as part of a package of incentives to tempt it into dropping its program.

While Hill has been cautious about the chances of success, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said last week that the United States was aiming for a denuclearized North Korea by January 2009, when Bush leaves office.

But many analysts who have closely followed the six-nation talks say North Korean leader Kim Jong-il has no intention of surrendering the nuclear program his nation has spent decades developing.

"Now that North Korea has the nuclear bargaining chip, it is never going to give it up," said John Feffer, the global affairs director at the US-based International Relations Center.

For North Korea, one of its main goals at this week's talks is to secure the lifting of the US financial sanctions, imposed last year for alleged counterfeiting and money laundering.

The United States had maintained the sanctions should not be brought into the six-party forum, insisting they were a law enforcement issue unrelated to the North's nuclear program.

AFP

US solons told Castro not dying, that he'll return

HAVANA—CUBAN LEADER FIDEL CASTRO is not dying, does not have cancer, and will return to public life, Cuban government officials told US Congress members visiting the communist country.

"We were told by government officials that he does not have cancer, and his condition is not terminal," Rep. Jeff Flake, an Arizona Republican who led the bipartisan delegation, told reporters on Sunday.

"The party line is that Fidel is coming back. He does not have cancer," said Rep. Jane Harman, a California Democrat.

The 10-member congressional delegation, the largest to go to Cuba since Castro's 1959 revolution, was ending a three-day visit aimed at improving ties between Havana and Washington.

But their efforts to launch a new dialogue with Cuba on the assumption

that Castro was out of the picture were rebuffed by Communist officials who insisted he was recovering and that their long-time ideological foe would have to change its policy of sanctions first.

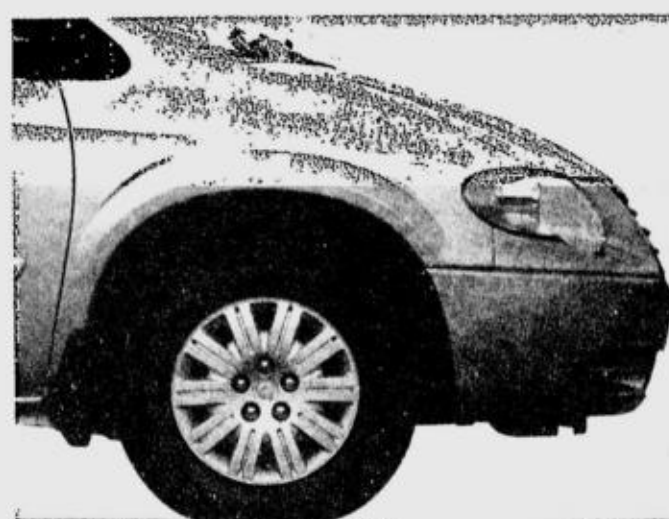
The Cuban government blames US sanctions enforced since 1962 for economic hardships endured by Cubans.

Castro, 80, has not been seen in public since then and his absence has fueled

speculation that he is dying.

His closest ally, Venezuelan President Hugo, said on Friday that Castro does not have cancer, but is fighting a "great battle" against a "very serious" illness.

US Intelligence chief John Negroponte said in an interview with The Washington Post published on Friday that Castro was near death and had "months, not years" to live. **Reuters**



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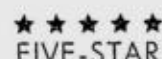
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The TESLAR Effect may "help compensate for some of the negative impact of using a cell phone"

In June 2002, *Alternative Medicine Magazine* conducted independent product testing which demonstrated that TESLAR may have a positive effect on the human body in the presence of a cell phone. This test measured Heart Rate Variability (HRV), which can be a good measurement of a body's overall response to external stress. This product test concluded that the use of TESLAR "may in fact compensate for some of the negative impact of using a cell phone."

In 2003, Dr. Nyjon Eccles, MD, saw similar results on patients. Dr. Eccles' HRV tests showed that without TESLAR, the nervous system can become stressed when exposed to an energized cell phone. While wearing TESLAR, results suggest a "stabilizing effect" on or even "beneficial stimulation" of nervous system activity.

Immune cell production increases in presence of the TESLAR Effect in laboratory experiment

Dr. Glen Rein, while at Stanford Medical School, showed that in the presence of TESLAR there was, on average, 137% enhancement of human immune cell growth (in-vitro). A separate test demonstrated that nerve cells (in-vitro) could inhibit their uptake of noradrenalin (a depression-fighting process) by as much as 19.5% in the presence of TESLAR.

Children wearing TESLAR showed improved concentration

In 2001, a 30-day study of 11 children with hyperactivity and attention problems was completed in J. Henderson, KY. Students were evaluated by teachers prior to beginning the study and again at the conclusion. Overall, per teachers' observations, students showed improvements in their ability to concentrate, play respectfully with other children, relate to adults, and respect authority, among other indicators.

The TESLAR technology is a beneficial effect of the TESLAR chip, the revolutionary chip found inside Philip Stein TESLAR watches. It was engineered to strengthen the body's natural electromagnetic energy field or biofield to protect the body from the possible hazards of external extremely low electromagnetic fields (ELF) produced by cell phones, computers and other electronic devices.

As a result of the TESLAR effect, past wearers of Philip Stein TESLAR timepieces have experienced deeper, more restful sleep; more calm and less tension in normally stressful situations; improved concentration; increased levels of energy; and an overall improvement in wellbeing.

For more information, log on to www.philipsteinTESLAR.com

*Philip Stein TESLAR is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. Results cannot be guaranteed as individual results vary.



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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Fragile truce in Gaza after violence

GAZA CITY—A FRAGILE TRUCE BETWEEN rival Palestinian groups was holding Monday after a day of deadly factional violence following President Mahmud Abbas's controversial call for early elections.

Amid the tenuous calm, British Prime Minister Tony Blair was due to hold talks with Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert on the latest leg of a regional tour aimed in part at reviving the dormant Middle East peace process.

Despite the accord between Abbas's Fatah party and the ruling Hamas—which has rejected the election call as a coup—exchanges of automatic gunfire continued late into the night in Gaza City.

Four people have been killed and dozens wounded in the impoverished territory since Abbas called for holding early presidential and parliamentary elections on Saturday.

Hamas, which has been in power

only since March after a shock election win over Fatah, has slammed the move as unconstitutional and tantamount to a call for civil war.

After a day of running gunbattles on the Gaza streets and tit-for-tat attacks that killed three people on Sunday, the two groups agreed to a truce.

But the ceasefire got off to an inauspicious start when Fatah boycotted a news conference with Hamas called to announce the truce, alleging violations.

Abbas's call for early elections has set off fears that the bitter power struggle between Hamas and the president's own Fatah faction could ignite a full-blown civil war.

The victims of the violence have included a 19-year-old woman and 13-year-old boy caught in the crossfire and two Fatah loyalists—a member of the presidential guards and a colonel in the national security services.

Unidentified gunmen also fired on hardline Hamas foreign minister Mahmud Zahar's vehicle in Gaza. He escaped unscathed.

That attack came just days after gunmen fired on Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniya's convoy in what Hamas branded an assassination attempt.

Abbas said elections were the way to resolve the seething tensions with Hamas, which have paralyzed the Palestinian administration, already broke because of a Western aid freeze.

"To break the vicious circle and prevent our lives from deteriorating further and our cause from eroding, I have decided to call early presidential and legislative

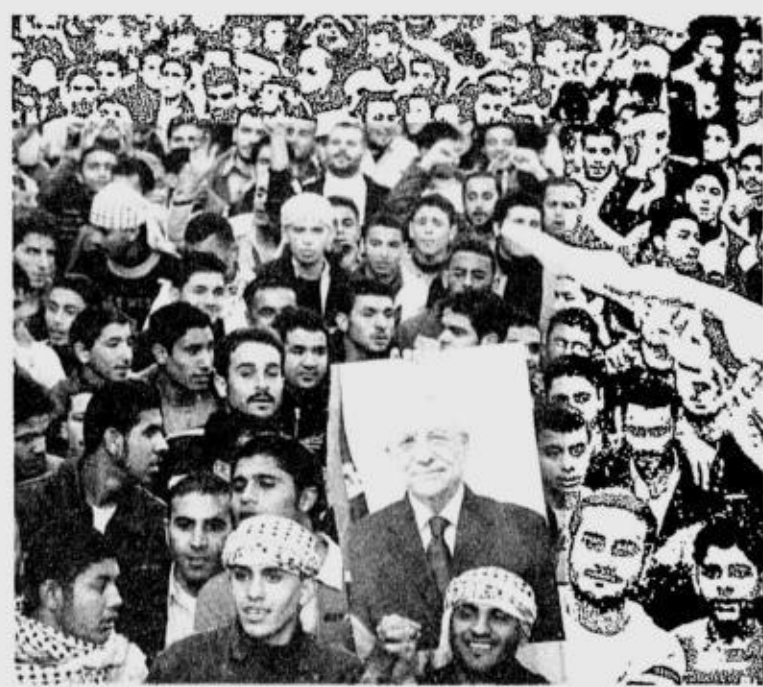
elections. Let the people have their say and decide," he said.

But he did not set a date. Election officials said they would need 110 days to organize a ballot once Abbas issues an official decree.

Two opinion polls released Sunday showed that more than 60 percent of Palestinians support holding early elections. According to one of them, Fatah would narrowly win a parliamentary election with 42 percent of the vote, compared with 36 percent for Hamas.

In Cairo on Saturday, Blair had urged foreign powers to back Abbas's election call.

"This is the time for the international community to come behind him, to help build up his authority and his capability to deliver improvement in living standards for the Palestinian people, but also the progress that we all want to see in resolving the Israel-Palestine issue." AFP



PALESTINIAN Fatah party supporters, loyal to President Mahmud Abbas, holds his poster as they rally in support of the president in Gaza City, Dec. 17.

Red Crescent stops work in Baghdad after kidnaps

BAGHDAD—IRAQI RED CRESCENT aid workers suspended work in war-torn Baghdad on Monday after two dozen of their colleagues fell victim to the latest mass kidnap to shock a city plagued by sectarian violence.

Meanwhile, new US Defense Secretary Robert Gates was to take office in Washington amid deepening divisions among US government officials and policy experts about how to handle the worsening crisis in Iraq.

"Only in Baghdad have we stopped, to make more pressure to free those who have been kidnapped," the Iraqi Red Crescent's secretary general Mazen Abdallah told AFP one day after the abductions.

"We are the only organization working in all Iraq. We don't want to stop," he added, emphasizing that the closure applied only to the Red Crescent's health and relief workers in the capital.

In addition to the main branch targeted in the kidnapping, the Iraqi Red Crescent has closed another 40 subsidiary offices in Baghdad, affecting more than 600 staff, a large proportion of them security guards, Abdallah said.

Thirteen of the 30 men snatched in Sunday's brazen raid by gunmen dressed in police uniforms have been released, including three guards from the nearby Dutch Embassy and 10 Red Crescent guards and drivers, Abdallah added.

AFP

UK cops arrest suspect in murders of 5 prostitutes

IPSWICH, England—Police arrested a 37-year-old man Monday morning on suspicion of murdering five prostitutes in eastern England, a senior officer said.

The man was arrested at about 7:20 a.m. at his home in Trimley, near the port of Felixstowe, Detective Chief Supt. Stewart Gull of Suffolk Police said in a brief statement to reporters.

"He has been arrested on the suspicion of murdering all five women," Gull said.

"The man is currently in custody at a police station in Suffolk where he will be questioned about the deaths later today," he said.

Trimley is 13 km southeast of Ipswich, where all five victims were known to work as prostitutes.

Their naked bodies were found

dumped in rural areas near Ipswich, 110 km northeast of London, over a 10-day span beginning Dec. 2.

Earlier in the morning, police announced that coroner's inquests into the deaths of Tania Nicol, Anneli Alderton, Paula Clennell and Annette Nicholls had been postponed.

Clennell, 24, died of compres-

sion to her neck, and Alderton, 24, was strangled, a senior pathologist determined. Post-mortem examinations of the bodies of Nicol, 19, and Nicholls, reached no conclusion on the cause of death.

An inquest into the death of Gemma Adams, 25, was opened and adjourned last week. The pathologist reached no conclusion about the cause of her death.

The investigation had strained the resources of one of England's smallest police forces, and 340 specialist investigators were brought in from across Britain to join 160 Suffolk officers working on the case.

By Sunday morning, police had received more than 10,000 calls from the public offering information, Gull said.

AP

What's most politically wrong word?

LOS ANGELES—"MACACA" YOU are number one.

The word "macaca," used by outgoing Republican Sen. George Allen of Virginia to describe a Democratic activist of Indian descent who was trailing his campaign, was named the most politically incorrect word of the year on Friday by Global Language Monitor, a nonprofit group that studies word usage.

"The word might have changed the political balance of the US Senate, since Allen's utterance (an offensive slang term for Indians from the Sub-continent) surely impacted his election bid," said the group's head, Paul JJ Payack.

Allen narrowly lost to Democrat James Webb in November, helping make it possible for the Democrats to capture control of the Senate.

In second place on this year's list was "Global Warming Denier," for someone who believes that climate change has moved from scientific theory to dogma.

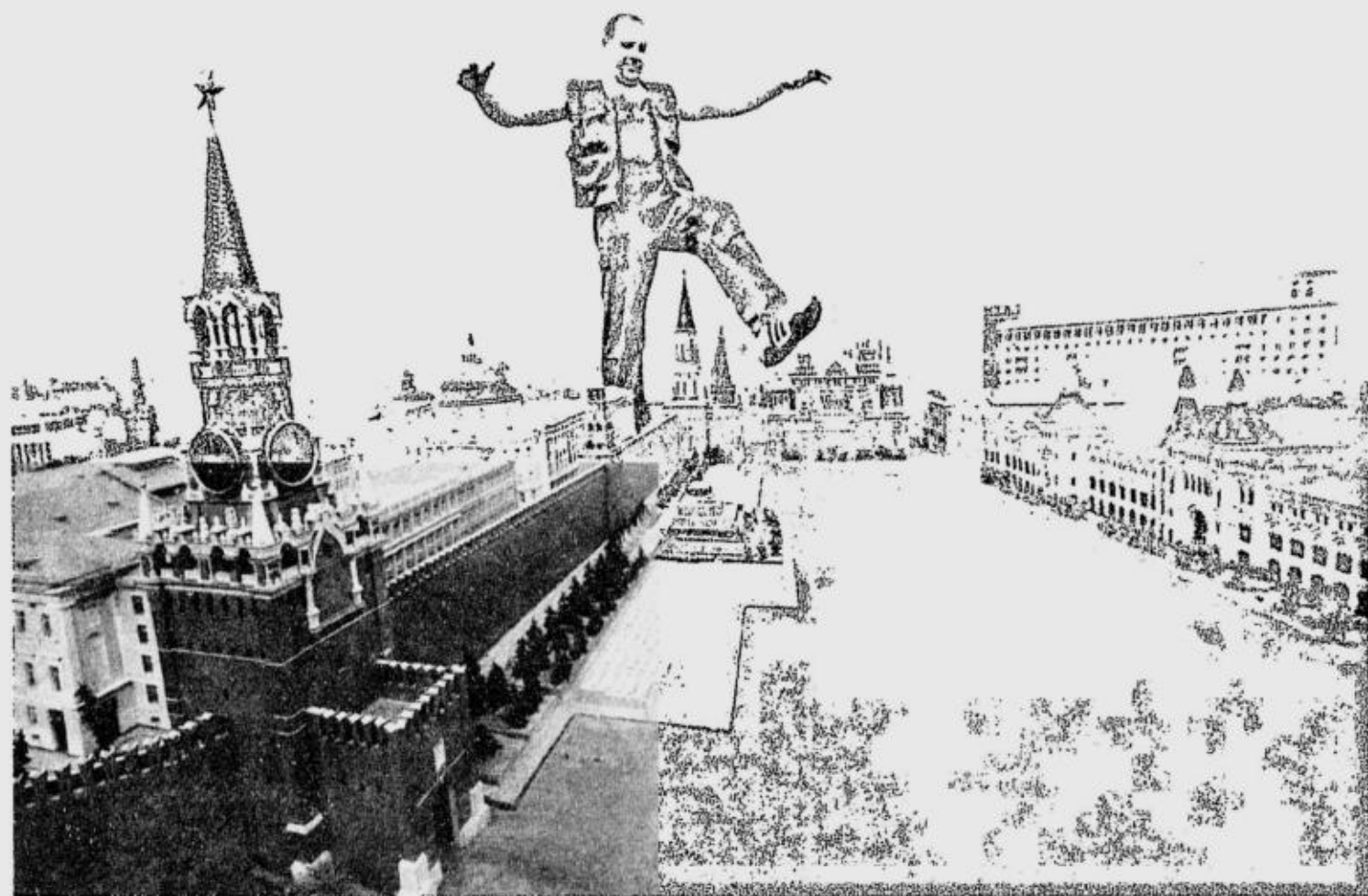
"There are now proposals that 'global warming deniers' be treated the same as 'Holocaust deniers': professional ostracism, belittlement, ridicule and, even, jail," Payack said.

In third was "Herstory" substituting for "History." Payack said there are nearly 900,000 Google citations for "Herstory," all based on a mistaken assumption that "history" is a sexist word.

"When Herodotus wrote the first history, the word meant simply an 'inquiry,'" he said.

In August, Global Language Monitor picked "truthiness" and "Wikiality"—two words popularized by political satirist Stephen Colbert on his TV show "The Colbert Report"—as the top television buzzwords of the year.

Reuters



IMAGES OF 2006

A cleaner walks in a diorama of a 1977 central Moscow in a shopping center in Moscow July 25, 2006. The 16-meter wide model that travelled the world as part of a roadshow marking the 60th anniversary of the Soviet Union, is to be auctioned off in August.

REUTERS

Americans abroad renounce citizenship over taxes

PARIS—SHE IS A FORMER MARINE, a native Californian and now an ex-American who prefers to remain discreet about abandoning her citizenship. After 10 years of warily considering options, she turned in her US passport last month without ceremony, becoming an alien in the view of her homeland.

"It's a really hard thing to do,"

said the woman, a 16-year resident of Geneva, Switzerland, who had tired of the cost and time of filing yearly US tax returns on top of her Swiss taxes. "I just kept putting this off. But it's my kids and the estate tax. I don't care if I die with only one Swiss franc to my name, but the US shouldn't get money I earned here when I die."

Historically, small numbers of Americans have turned in their passports every year for political and economic reasons, with the numbers reaching a high of about 2,000 during the Vietnam War in the early 1970s.

But after Congress sharply raised taxes this year for many Americans living abroad, some international tax lawyers say

they detect rising demand from citizens to renounce ties with the United States, the only developed country that taxes its citizens while they live overseas. Americans abroad are also taxed in the countries where they live.

"The administrative costs of being an American and living outside the US have gone up dra-

matically," said Marnin Michaels, a tax lawyer with Baker & McKenzie in Zurich, Switzerland.

A spokeswoman for the US Embassy in London, Karen Maxfield, said expatriates usually took the step "because they do not have strong ties to the United States and do not believe that they will ever live there in the future."

NYT

Income disparity in rich Singapore comparable to poor Kenya's

By Geert De Clercq

SINGAPORE—WHEN WEE SHU Min, the teenage daughter of a Singapore member of parliament stumbled across the blog of a Singaporean who wrote that he was worried about losing his job, she thought she'd give him a piece of her mind.

She called him "one of many wretched, undermotivated, overassuming leeches in our country" on her own blog and signed off with "please, get out of my elite uncaring face."

Wee was flamed by hundreds

of fellow bloggers, but when her father Wee Siew Kim—an MP in Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's constituency—told a Singapore newspaper that "her basic point is reasonable," the row moved well beyond the blogosphere.

The episode highlighted a deep rift in Singapore society and was an embarrassment for the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) and Prime Minister Lee, who has made the reduction of the income gap one of the priorities of his new government.

"Coming from an MP in the prime minister's constituency,

these comments really were political dynamite," political commentator Seah Chiang Nee told Reuters.

"If the political arrogance and elitism get any worse, the PAP will lose more electoral ground," he added.

Singapore is Asia's second-richest country after Japan with a gross domestic product per capita of about \$27,000, ranking between EU member Italy and Spain. But in terms of income disparity, Singapore is in altogether different company.

Singapore's Gini index—which

measures inequality of income distribution among households—of 42.5 puts it between Burundi and Kenya, the UN Human Development Report 2006 shows.

"Yes, the gini coefficient is very high. Through housing, health care and education, we have tried to narrow the income gap, but not through wages," National Development Minister Mah Bow Tan told Reuters in an interview last month.

Singapore pays no employment benefits, no pensions and has no legal minimum wage, but

education is cheap and excellent, health care is subsidized and the government gives subsidies to first-time buyers of government-built flats.

Last month, Singapore's first parliament session since the May 6 poll was dominated by the inequality theme.

PM Lee ruled out the introduction of old-age pensions, a minimum wage or European-style welfare.

"We have treated welfare as a dirty word. The opposition, I think the Workers' Party, has called for a 'permanent uncondi-

tional needs-based welfare system.' I think that is an even dirtier five words," he said in a speech on Nov. 13.

But he acknowledged that since the Asian financial crisis in 1997, the income gap had widened, and said that his government plans to "tilt the balance in favor of the lower-income groups."

While Lee's ruling PAP is in no danger of losing its stranglehold on parliament—where it has 82 out of 84 elected seats—the growing income disparity has hurt its credibility.

Reuters

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SPORTS

Editor Teddyvic S. Melendres

ur feedback: inquirer_sprt name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

WHAT'S INSIDE

Arenas
weaves magic
as Wizards pip
Lakers /A23



MARVIN Dumandan lines up his putt.

ERIKARAZAS

RP AMATEUR

Bayron, Dacudao lead

By Musong R. Castillo

CANLUBANG, LAGUNA—VETERANS JAY Bayron and Louie Dacudao held sway under adverse conditions yesterday but Michael Bibat floundered in the men's division of the Philippine Amateur golf championship at the exclusive The Country Club here.

Bayron and Dacudao matched par 72s even as Bibat, bronze medalist in the recent Doha Asian Games, faced the prospect of becoming the biggest casualty after submitting a double bogey-littered 83.

Tall and hefty but not the longest of hitters, Bibat, who won the Singapore Am two years ago, stood in 55th place with his nines of 44-39 and will have to make something happen in the second round today if he hopes to advance.

Meanwhile, a youngster from Bacolod showed up the veterans and assembled her version of a level card to pace the ladies' division.

Mia Piccio, runner-up to Frances Bondad last year, conquered the long layout and the winds that virtually bowled the field over to take a two-stroke lead at the start of a similar two-round classification phase.

Tournament format for both divisions calls for a 36-hole classification, before the top 32 players advance to match play tomorrow where the No. 1 clashes with No. 32, No. 2 slugs it out with No. 31 and so on.

The defending champions—Juvic Pagunsan and Bondad—are not around.

Pagunsan, who methodically tore Malaysian Siva Chandhran apart in last year's 36-hole finals at the Marapara, turned pro at the start of the year and won the Asian Tour's Rookie of the Year award recently.

The 19-year-old Bondad became one of the youngest members of the Australian national team after seeing action in the World Amateurs in Johannesburg, South Africa, recently.

With the up-and-down, wind-swept The Country Club layout playing its toughest yet, the tournament is anybody's game.

"It was a struggle out there, as it always has been in the Country Club," Bayron told the Inquirer in Filipino. "But right now, the objective is to advance and not do anything foolish because the match play is entirely different."

Bayron, who assumed the No. 1 RP ranking after Pagunsan left the national pool, fired two birdies against the same number of bogeys for a 36-36 which the Davao-based Dacudao, a PAL Interclub mainstay who last played for Del Monte, churned out later in the afternoon.

National player Marvin Dumandan shared third place with ex-RP pool member Tonitis Asistio with 74s, with jungolfer Marcel Puyat leading three others with 75s. National Caddies' Open program products Mark Fernando and Junel Ababa also shot 75s like Joel Opaco. Anthony Fernando led five other players with 76s.

Pagunsan honored; Singh top awardee

BANGKOK—FILIPINO JUVIC PAGUNSAN shared honors with India's Jeev Milkha Singh at the Asian Tour's UBS Awards Gala 2006 at the Oriental Hotel here Sunday night.

Pagunsan was named Rookie of the Year after finishing seventh with \$291,847 on the UBS Order of Merit. The two-time Southeast Asian Games titlist posted four top 10s capped by a second place effort in last month's UBS Open in Hong Kong.

Singh capped a dream season when he won the inaugural UBS Special Achievement and scooped up the Players' Player of the Year. The two accolades were in addition to the UBS Order of Merit title which

Singh claimed for the first time in his career following a stellar season in which he won the Volvo China Open and registered five other top 10s for a record haul of \$591,884 from 14 starts.

"It's been a dream year for me. To receive the recognition from my fellow competitors, it's a great honor. Winning these awards will stay with me for the rest of my life. It means a lot as this is the place where I started my career."

"The Asian Tour has been a family to me because this is where I started. Everyone on Tour is so friendly and I'll never forget that," said Singh, who received a standing ovation after being crowned Asia's number

one. He is the third Indian after Arjun Atwal and Jyoti Randhawa to claim the mantle.

Singh, who has reached the world's top 50 which guarantees him starts in all four Majors next year, also enjoyed tremendous success in Europe where he won the season-ending Volvo Masters in Spain and also triumphed twice in Japan.

Anthony Kang of the United States won the birdie leader award after snaring a total of 322 birdies throughout 2006, which saw the Asian Tour stage an unprecedented



PAGUNSAN

ed 27 tournaments with a record of over \$24 million in total prize money.

India's Jyoti Randhawa took home the lowest stroke average with 69.74, a wonderful reflection of his consistent performance in which he won the Hero Honda Indian Open and

finished sixth on the UBS Order of Merit. Simon Yates of Scotland hit the most greens in regulation with a strike rate of 73 percent to top the category while Thailand's Chawalit Plaphol took home the lowest putting average award with 1.69 putts per GIR.

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NCA holds 2nd leg today

THE NATIONAL COCKERS ASSOCIATION will hold the second leg of its derby circuit today at the world-class Pasay City cockpit.

The 5-cock derby, which follows the highly successful NCA first leg held Dec. 12-14, will be hosted by Gov. Ito Ynares.

Stalwarts Vice Mayor Jun Topacio, Nestor Mercado and Lito Orillaza emerged victorious during the first leg and have vowed to defend their titles today.

Other contenders are Ramon Revilla, Manolo Lopez, Manny Pacquiao, Patric Antonio, Jerry Ramos, Gov. Ito Ynares, Sec. Ronnie Puno, Jun Santiago, Edwin Abella, Boy

Jiao, Ricky Valencia, Bebot Villar, Mario Villamor, Manny Santos, Art Sevilla, Edwin Santos, Eric dela Rosa, Michael Co, Lando Celebre, Jerry Ramos and Rey Briones.

Also entered are bigwigs Tony Open, chair Rudy Albano, Ruel Ricafort, Edgar Santos, JV Magsaysay, Pico Berin, Efren Canlas, Jung Jingco, Jet Fernando, Boyet Joson, Eilan Nagano, the Madlambayan brothers, Benjie Lim, Paul Estrellado, Tony Lasala, Louie Cua, Jun and Rudy Jingco, Boy Royo, Nestor Mercado, Lito Orillaza, Rudy Salud, Manny and Arman Santos, Danding Cojuangco, Peping Ngo, Tony Tan, Boy Marzo and Pol Estrellado.

SPORTSWATCH

Last chance to join Makati cockfest

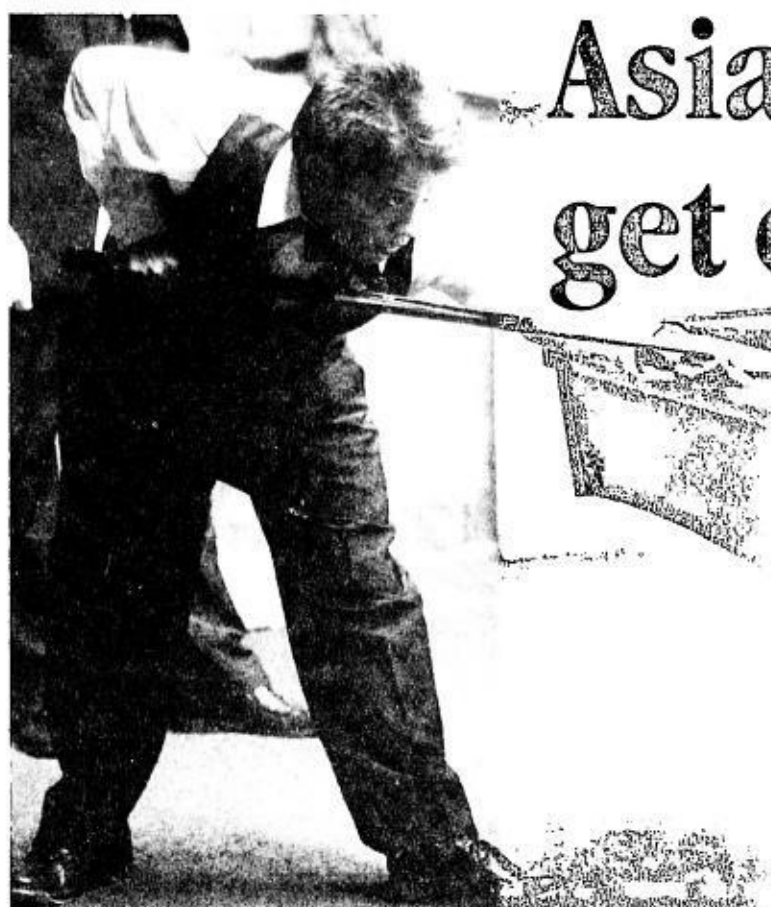
ATTENTION SHIFTS TO THE MAKATI COLISEUM AS THE REMAINING ROUNDS of PSM Pamaskong Salpuhan 6-cock derby sizzle on Dec. 23, 27 and 30. Promoters Lito Orillaza, Rudy Salud and William Co of WTJ Sports and Amusement Corp. announced yesterday that two more qualifying rounds (3-cock) will be staged on Dec. 23 and 27 to accommodate the influx of walk-in participants from the provinces. No less than P3 million in guaranteed prize awaits the winners, for an affordable entry fee of P11,000. A bonus prize of P100,000 will be divided among three pointers in the eliminations. Participants with 1.5, 2, 2.5 and 3 points will compete for the title on Dec. 30. Call 896-3545 and 895-6475.

New Year derby at Cainta Dec. 29

CAINTA FAIR CENTER COLISEUM, NOW MANAGED BY RIZAL SPORTSMAN Sam Mendoza, presents the New Year Encounter 4-Cock Derby on Dec. 29 with P500,000 in guaranteed prize. As bonus, the fastest win champion will bring home a brand-new motorcycle. Entry fee is P11,000 and minimum bet P5,500. Meanwhile, no less than 200 small-time cockers collide at CFCC this Thursday via the Super Fastest Win One-Cock Ulutan. A jackpot prize of P405,000 awaits the winners. Entry fee is P1,800 and minimum bet P3,300. The fastest win champion will receive P45,000 plus a brand-new motorcycle worth P45,000, while the winning handler and gaffer will receive P7,000 and P3,000, respectively. For the second placer, P20,000 and brand-new motorcycle. His handler and gaffer will also receive P4,000 and P2,000, respectively. The third to 30th placers will also receive prizes. The first 10 winners and last 10 winners will get P2,000 each as bonus. For inquiries, contact 655-3334, 240-0979 or 0928-6316711 (Arnold Amores).



CHAMPS: Saint Martin Montessori table tennis team, coached by Michael Magpantay (left), clinched the girl's and boy's elementary and high school titles in the recent 5th Donie Table Tennis National Inter-Scholastics team event and 4th Gerry Cruz Memorial event.



ANTONIO Gabica: Richer by P2.3 million.

LYN RILLON

Asiad medalists get cash rewards

By June Navarro

AN UNHERALDED BILLIARDS PLAYER WILL LEAD 17 OTHER Filipino athletes who will receive their cash incentives today for bringing home 19 medals, four of them golds, from the 15th Asian Games in Doha, Qatar, recently.

Antonio Gabica, who shone for what has been described as a "weak" billiards team with a gold-silver medal effort, will get a windfall of P2.3 million from President Macapagal-Arroyo during a courtesy call by the victorious Nationals this morning at Malacañang Palace.

A total of P13.5 million will be given away with boxers Joan Tipon and Violito Payla and wushu bet Rene Catalan receiving P1.5 million each as the other gold medalists of the RP delegation that finished 18th overall from a field of 45 nations.

The monetary rewards were assured through RA 9064 known as the Sports Incentives Act and approved in 2001 where P1 million was reserved for a gold, P500,000 for a silver and P100,000 for bronze from the funds of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation.

The President then announced additional incentives of P500,000 for a gold, P300,000 for silver and P200,000 for bronze on the second week of the Asiad.

Gabica won the gold medal in 9-ball singles over compatriot Jeffrey De Luna after earlier missing the gold in the 8-ball singles in a performance that showed there were many other billiards aces in the country other than Efren (Bata) Reyes and Co.

The two silvers in billiards were matched by taekwondo's Mary Antoinette Rivero and Tshomlee Go. Maria Mama Pabillone of karate and wushu's Eduardo Polayang accounted for the other silvers which were worth P800,000 for each athlete.

Winning bronze medals worth P300,000 each were Katlyn Eunice Allora, Veronica Domingo and Manuel Rivero Jr. of taekwondo, boxing's Godfrey Castro and Genebert Basadre, Noel Espinosa of karate and golf's Michael Bibat.

Fil-American Cecil Mamiit, who partnered with Eric Taino, also a Fil-Am, in winning the bronze in the men's doubles tennis will get P450,000 for also winding up third in men's singles. Taino will receive P150,000.

Race 1—(Qrt/Tri)—Amazing Pace (2), Rainbow Ridge (4), Green Money (6), Dictionary (1)
Race 2—(Tri)—Eskapo (2), Ho Ho Ho (5), Valid Hazm (1)
Race 3—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Heart of the Wind (5), Astimegoesby (7), Magic Bullet (4), Valiant Queen (2), Loaded (1)
Race 4—(Tri)—Coat of Arms (4), Top Most (3), Kate Alex (5)
Race 5—(Qrt/Tri)—Gung Ho (3), Idol (4), Sharp Cookie (5), Donna Messier (6)

Race 6—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Dulce My Love (6), Sovereign Dancer (5), Pristine Water (7), Sea of Galilee (2), Summit Force (8)
Race 7—(Qrt/Tri)—Crystal City (6), D As In Dixie (1), Tellmenolles (5), Prince Aidan (4)
Race 8—(Qrt/Tri)—Grand Fiesta (7), Gonfalon Story (6), Terminator (5), Parrot Moe (3)
Race 9—(Super 6/Qrt/Tri)—Ger Fancis (5), Ed Foreover (8), Kailey's Tiara/Grand Slam (1), Golden Lass (2), Secret Truth (4), Magic Key (7)

BY TOP CHOICE

PSC chair leaves fate to President

By Marc Anthony Reyes

I WILL GO WHEREVER THE PRESIDENT wants me to.

Philippine Sports Commission chair Butch Ramirez declared this yesterday as he reported back to work as the country's sports czar following a successful campaign in the 15th Asian Games in Doha, Qatar.

While he fell short by one gold of his predicted target of five victories, the Asiad haul of four golds, six silvers and nine bronzes was the country's best since the 1962 Jakarta Games where the Filipino bet came up with a 7-6-24 tally.

The performance was all the more impressive since the PSC pulled it off despite a meager budget of P30 million which was way below what the country spent when it captured the Southeast

Asian Games overall championship for the first time last year in Manila.

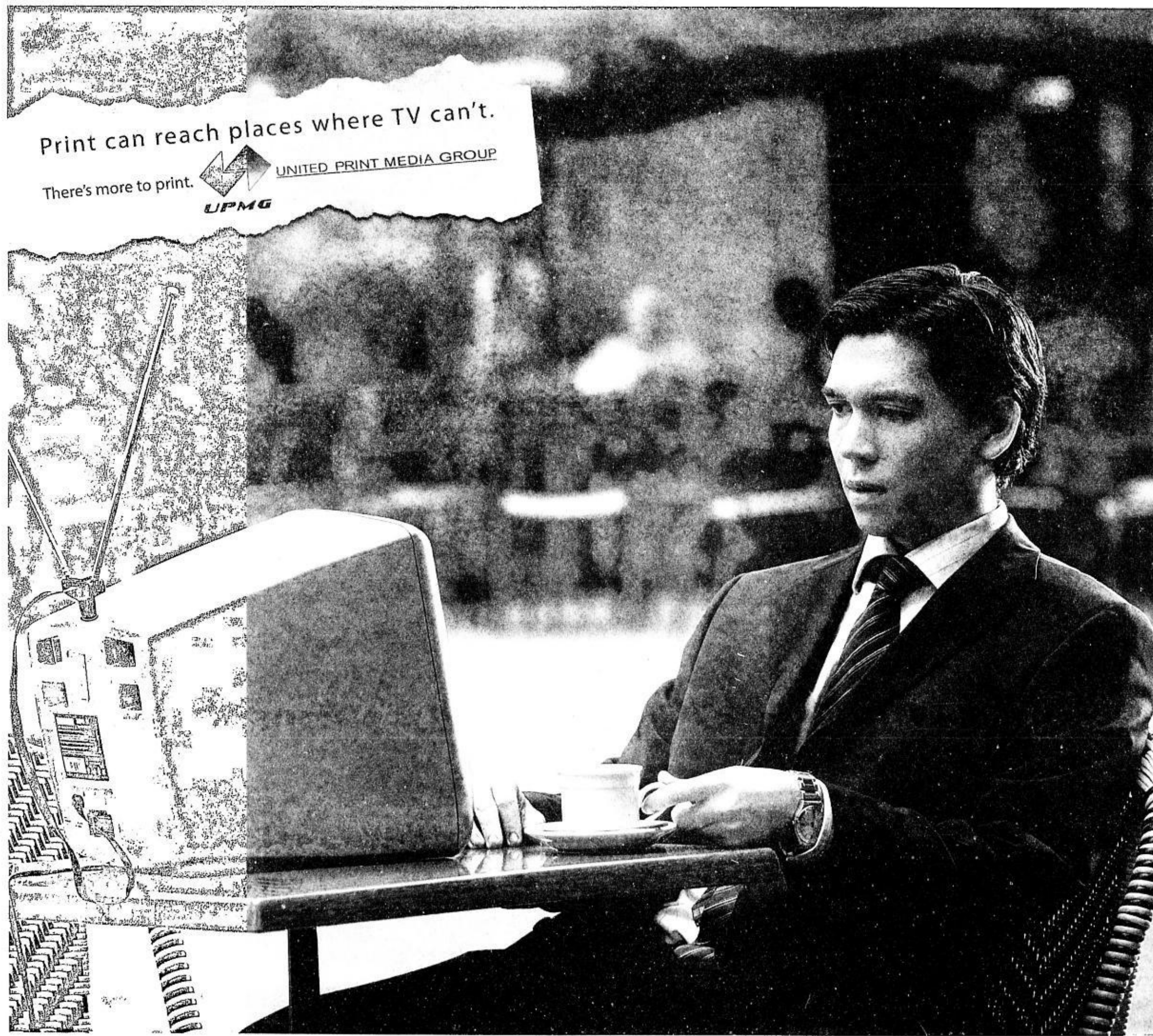
Still Ramirez said he's leaving his fate up to President Macapagal-Arroyo. "I will serve the President anytime, wherever she wants me even if not in the PSC," Ramirez told the Inquirer. He is expected to get the Presidential reply today when he accompanies the Asiad medalists in their courtesy call on GMA.

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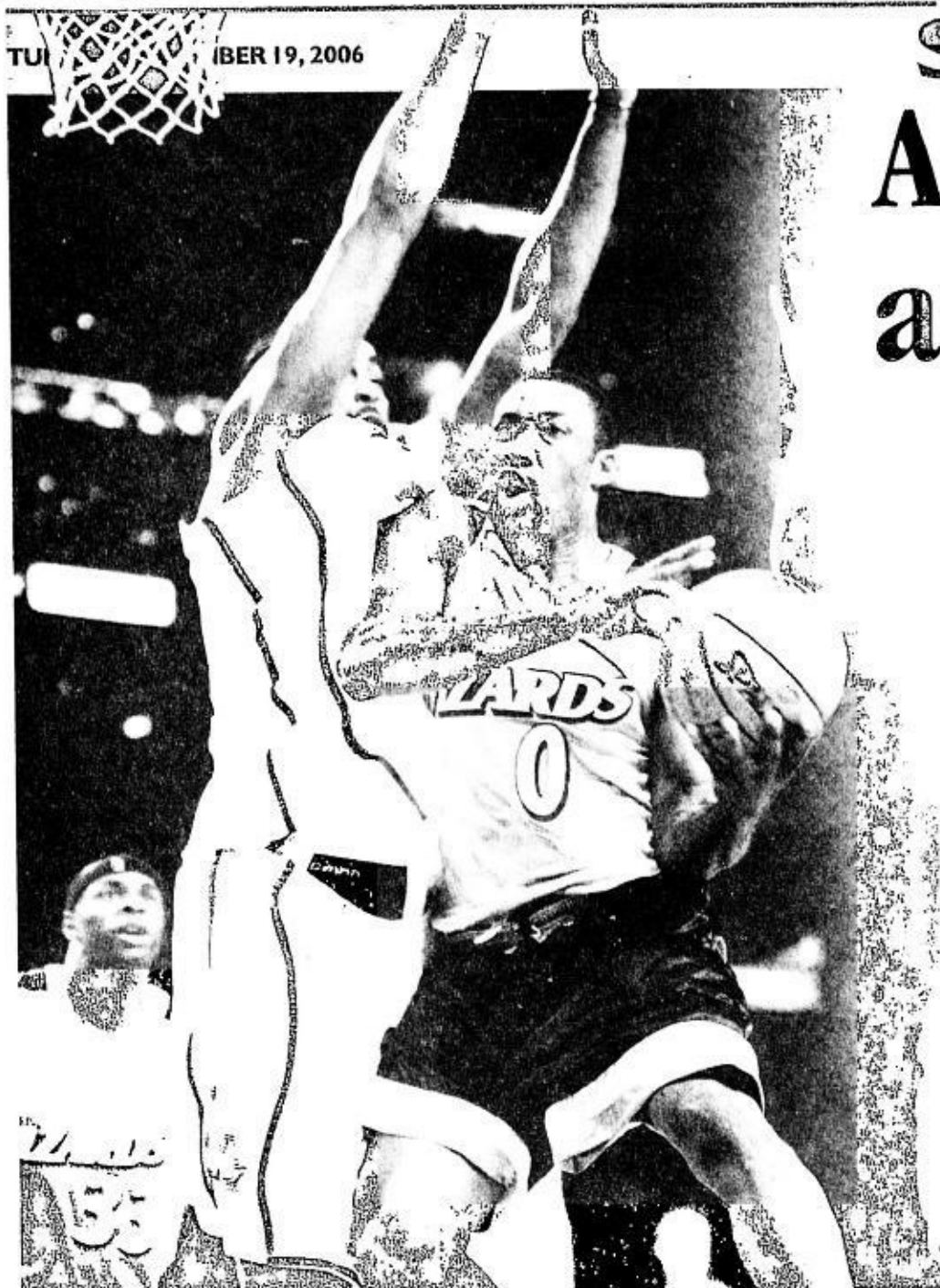
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SPORTS



Arenas weaves magic as Wizards pip Lakers



WASHINGTON Wizards' Gilbert Arenas slams against Los Angeles Lakers' Ronny Turiaf in their NBA game in Los Angeles, Sunday.

LOS ANGELES—GILBERT ARENAS set a franchise record with 60 points, 16 of them in overtime, to lead the Washington Wizards to a 147-141 victory over Kobe Bryant and the Los Angeles Lakers on Sunday night.

In a Kobe-like performance, Arenas outscored the Lakers' Bryant by 15 points.

The Wizards' guard went 17-of-32 from the floor, including 5-of-12 from 3-point range. He made 21 of his 27 free throws and also had eight assists and eight rebounds.

He scored 14 points in a row for Washington, including a pair of 3-pointers, in one stretch of the 5-minute overtime.

Bryant, coming off a 53-point performance his previous game, had 45 points on 15-of-24 shooting, but had just four points in overtime.

Antawn Jamison had 25 points and

13 rebounds for Washington, and Caron Butler scored 27. Vladimir Radmanovic, starting in place of the injured Lamar Odom for the Lakers, had 27 points, and Luke Walton had 15 points and a career-high 11 assists.

The previous franchise high was 56 by Earl Monroe on Feb. 13, 1968, against the Lakers in overtime, when the Wizards were the Baltimore Bullets.

Earlier in Los Angeles, Yao Ming had 32 points and 10 rebounds, Rafer Alston added 24 points and eight assists, and Houston snapped a three-game losing streak without Tracy McGrady.

McGrady missed his fourth straight game because of back spasms.

Shaun Livingston led Los Angeles with 21 points, nine rebounds and six assists. Chris Kaman had 20 points and 11 rebounds, and Elton Brand had 19 points and nine rebounds.

In Indianapolis, Carlos Boozer has 18

points and 11 rebounds, and Mehmet Okur added 17 points to help Utah open a five-game trip with a victory.

The Pacers, who had beaten Utah seven straight times over the course of the last four years, rallied from 21 points down in the third quarter and pulled to 100-94 on a basket by Jamaal Tinsley with 24 seconds remaining. Rookie Dee Brown then hit four of six free throws in the closing seconds to finish the scoring for the Jazz.

Jermaine O'Neal led Indiana with 31 points.

In Toronto—Morris Peterson had 23 points, and T.J. Ford added 21 points and 14 assists to lead the Raptors to their third straight victory without Chris Bosh.

NBA on TV today
8:30 a.m.—Utah vs New York
(replays @ 4 p.m. & 9:30 p.m.)

Hornets' Stojakovic undergoes surgery

OKLAHOMA CITY—NEW ORLEANS guard Peja Stojakovic had a disc fragment removed from his lower back Sunday, a move the Hornets hope will help speed the three-time All-Star's return to the lineup.

The Hornets, who also announced that forward David West will have surgery on a bothersome right elbow,

provided no timetable for Stojakovic's return. He has missed nine games already, with what initially was diagnosed as back spasms.

West has missed 15 games since straining his right forearm Nov. 10 against Portland, and New Orleans also has been without top reserve Bobby Jackson with a cracked rib.

"We will evaluate Peja and David once they have recovered from their surgeries before we make a determination on their status," Hornets general manager Jeff Bower said. "Although our team has been slowed by injuries as of late, we don't want to rush their returns to the detriment of their health."

Banner year for Federer

PARIS—ROGER FEDERER RUBBER-stamped his status as one of the greatest players the world has seen with a year which was exceptional and record-shattering even by his own mighty standards.

The Swiss ended 2006 with 12 titles from 16 finals and a 92-5 match record.

He started in January with victory in Doha, ended it with a third Masters Cup in four years and, in between, won back his Australian Open title and defended his Wimbledon and US Open crowns.

At the age of 25, his career title count now stands at 45, his year's prize money of almost \$8,500,000 took his lifetime total to \$28,576,000 and sent his rivals into a trough of despair over how to react.

And Federer's reaction to their shortcomings? He thinks it's funny.

"I had to laugh at one stage how well I was playing, I always came up with a great answer," said Federer after he swept aside James Blake in the Masters Cup final in Shanghai.

"To come to this point in my career where I feel so happy with my game, it's come such a long way."

Federer played 17 tournaments in 2006 and reached the final in 16 of them.

Four of his five defeats came at the hands of rival Rafael Nadal, surprisingly on the hard courts of Dubai, but not so surprisingly on the clay of Monte Carlo, Rome and Roland Garros, the only Grand Slam the world number one has yet to crack.

Only once did he fail to reach a final when Britain's Andy Murray beat him in the second round of the Cincinnati

Masters just days after a sapping march to another title in Toronto.

His 2006 roll of honor reads: Doha, the Australian Open, Indian Wells Masters, Miami Masters, Halle, Wimbledon, Toronto Masters, US Open, Tokyo, Madrid Masters, Basel and the Masters Cup in Shanghai.

Federer comfortably finished 2006 as world number one for the third year in a row and will now pass Jimmy Connors' 25-year-old record of 160 consecutive weeks at the top on Feb. 26 next year.

"I think that is definitely one of the big records I've broken, maybe the biggest so far in my career," said the Swiss.

Such is his lead in the rankings that he is guaranteed to remain number one, even if he does not play again before March next year.



ROGER Federer: Exceptional.

NBA probing Thomas' role in NY rumble

THE NBA IS INVESTIGATING WHETHER ISIAH Thomas, the president and coach of the New York Knicks, ordered a hard foul that touched off a brawl with the Denver Nuggets Saturday night at Madison Square Garden, several people involved in the investigation said Sunday.

The Nuggets, according to those people, are pointing to an exchange between Thomas and Carmelo Anthony—part of which was captured by the MSG Network—that seemed to convey a threat. None of the people who spoke about the exchange wanted to be identified, because the investigation was ongoing.

Ten players were ejected after the fight, which started when Mardy Collins, a Knicks rookie, clobbered J.R. Smith of the Nuggets as he was driving for a basket.

Some of these players, and possibly Thomas, are expected to receive suspensions Monday once the league reviews the MSG tape and interviews players, coaches and security personnel. There is no known NBA precedent for punishing a coach for instigating a fight.

With 1 minute, 32 seconds left in the game, the MSG broadcast focused on Thomas while Denver's Marcus Camby shot free throws. The Nuggets were leading by 117-100. Thomas, standing on the sideline, then starts talking to a Nuggets player. The player is not in the camera shot, but the broadcaster Mike Breen notes that Thomas is talking to Anthony.

There is no audio of Thomas, but he appears to say: "Hey, don't go to the basket right now. It wouldn't be nice." Seconds later, Thomas cocks his head, holds out his right palm and, with a slight smile, adds, "Just letting you know."

Calvin Andrews, Anthony's agent, confirmed Sunday night that Thomas had told Anthony to stay away from the area under the basket. Andrews indicated that Anthony gave that account to NBA officials earlier Sunday. Thomas also spoke to league officials.

NYT News Service

Tiger tames field, donates \$1.35M purse



TIGER WOODS: Three-time winner AFP

LOS ANGELES—TIGER WOODS FIRED A six-under par 66 final round here Sunday to win the \$5.75 million Target World Challenge, defeating US Open champion Geoff Ogilvy of Australia by four strokes.

World number one Woods finished on 16-under par 272 by curling in a six-foot birdie putt at the last hole, the only birdie of the last day at the 18th hole.

Two weeks shy of his 31st birthday, Woods won for the third time at the annual event he hosts at Sherwood Country Club, giving him eight triumphs and three runner-up finishes in stroke-play events over the latter half of 2006.

Woods' father Earl died in May but after missing the cut in June's US Open, Woods has played some of his greatest

golf, including the British Open and PGA Championship.

"Hey, life is full of mysteries and you've got to deal with things as they come," Woods said. "Who's to know that if Dad didn't struggle and end up passing that I wouldn't have played that well in the summer? Who knows?"

Woods, who also won the Challenge in 2001 and 2004, captured the \$1.35 million top prize and donated the money to the Southern California learning center for children that bears his name.

"It has been a year of two halves really," Woods said. "On the golf course, it has been something else to have things come together, especially to win two majors this year."

Ogilvy fired a final-round 71 to finish second on 276, one stroke ahead of US veteran Chris DiMarco, who led Woods by a stroke when the day began. DiMarco won \$570,000 while Ogilvy took home \$840,000.

"I hit a few bad shots but at least I finished the round under par," Ogilvy said. "I would have had to shoot something pretty special to beat him today."

"In my mind I knew I was going to have to shoot 5- or 6-under to win. In hindsight I would have had 5-under for a playoff. I knew I had to."

"It's just harder to do that, especially when you're not in your best frame of mind after bogeying a par-5 on the second hole. It's a frustrating way to start."

chronos

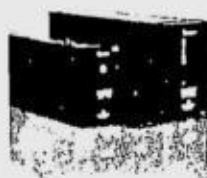
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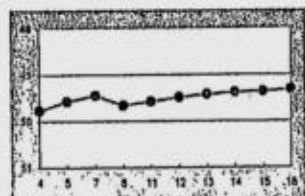
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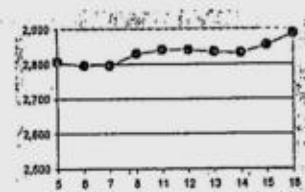


INDICATORS CURRENCIES



DECEMBER
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STOCK MARKET PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



DECEMBER
(See stock market report on Page B2)

Stocks at 9 1/2-year high

SHARE PRICES CLOSED 0.75-percent higher yesterday, with fund managers buying up blue chips and window dressing their portfolios as the year draws to a close, dealers said.

The composite index rose 21.54 points to 2,887.83, its highest level in nearly nine and a half years, after moving between 2,856.29 and 2,885.67.

STOCKS/B2

11-month BOP surplus hits \$3.14B \$17-M deficit posted in Nov. due to debt prepayments

By Doris C. Dumlaog

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN SIX MONTHS, THE PHILIPPINES incurred a balance-of-payments (BOP) shortfall of \$17 million in November as the public sector took advantage of strong dollar inflows and an appreciating peso to pay foreign debts ahead of maturity.

Based on a Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas report released yesterday, the country's BOP swung to a deficit in November from a surplus of \$536 million in October, but the windfall in earlier months still resulted in a cumulative surplus of \$3.14 billion for the 11-month period.

The BOP measures the foreign ex-

change transactions between the local economy and the rest of the world.

Any transaction that gives rise to a payment by a Philippine resident like importation or debt servicing is a deficit item in the BOP while any that gives rise to a receipt like borrowing, export or inward remittance is a surplus item.

"The small BOP deficit in November

was due to the debt prepayments," BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said.

It was the third monthly BOP deficit recorded by the Philippines so far this year. The last time it incurred a shortfall was in May at \$36 million, following a deficit of \$277 million in April.

But the month's deficit was much smaller than the \$170-million shortfall in November last year.

On a cumulative basis, the 11-month surplus of \$3.14 billion was also much better than the surplus of \$2.13 billion in the same period last year.

The country would have sustained a surplus last month if not for debt prepayments made by the BSP and the national government.

This November, the BSP alone

preterminated \$215 million in loans and notes originally maturing in 2008 and 2010.

The national government also bought back during the period \$165 million worth of Brady bonds with various maturities from 2007 to 2010, following the same tack pursued by Latin American countries that rebounded from fiscal woes like Mexico, Brazil and Colombia.

Some \$411 million of these Bradys had been retired ahead of maturity on June.

The Brady bonds were named after Nicholas Brady, the US treasury chief during the term of President Ronald Reagan who proposed the issuance of these bonds to help heavily indebted countries like the Philippines restructure their commercial

11-MONTH BOP/B2

SETTLEMENT PROGRAMS

BIR prods tax delinquents

By Michelle V. Remo

CATCHING UP WITH ITS TAX-COLLECTION target for 2006, the Bureau of Internal Revenue has urged tax delinquent taxpayers to avail themselves of the revenue agency's compromise programs before the year ends.

Rey Asterio Tambis, president of the BIR's Association of Chief Revenue Officers of the Philippines (Acrophil), said in a statement that these programs would allow taxpayers to clean their records before 2007 begins.

The BIR is officially tasked to col-

lect P675.4 billion in taxes this year, about 25 percent higher than its previous year's collection.

The BIR, however, set its own target of only P600 billion, insisting that taxes on government securities should not be part of its goal. The BIR argued

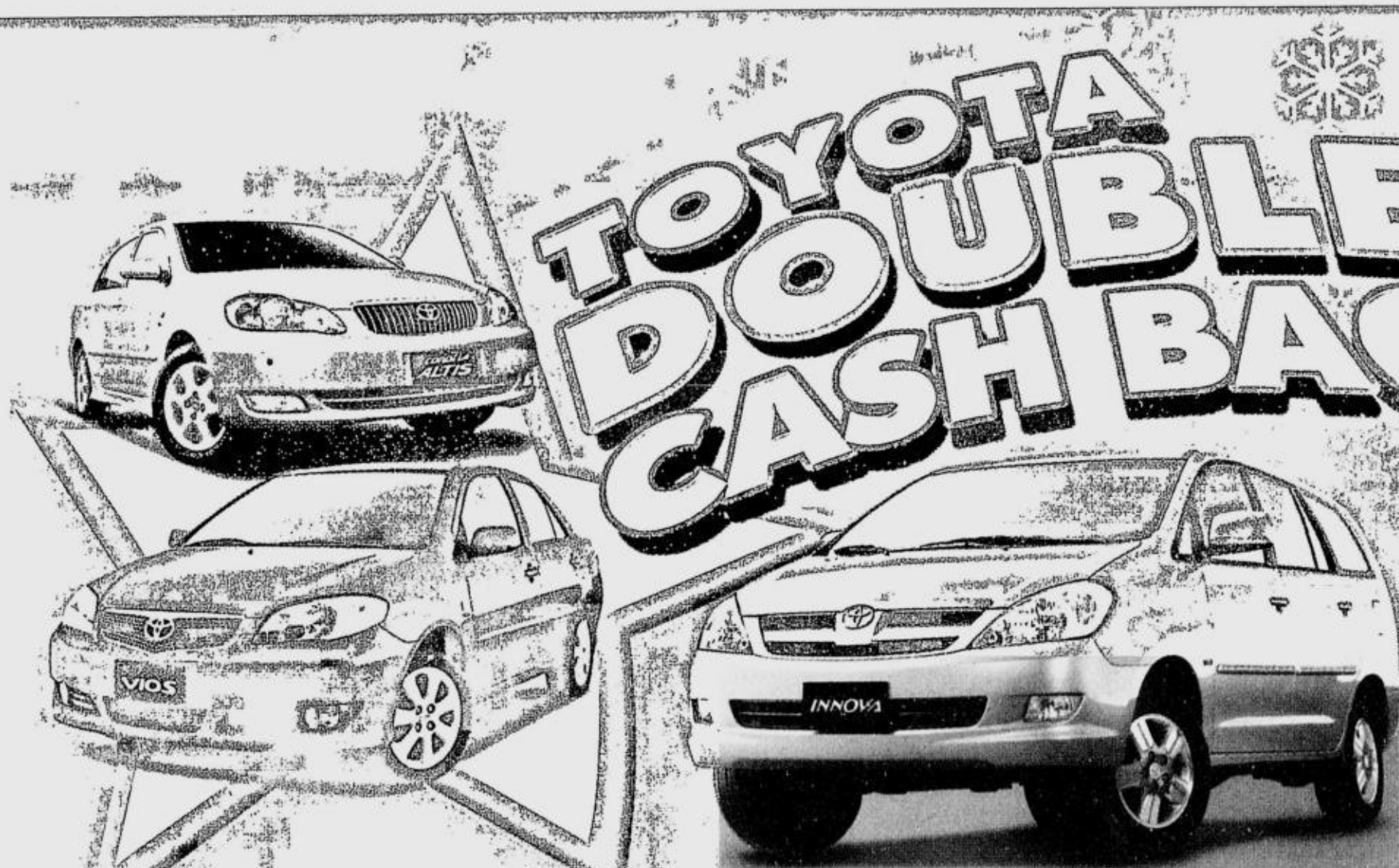
BIR PRODS/B2

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■ Seaoil cuts price of ethanol blended gas /B8



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Banks' bad loans drop to 8-yr low

NPL ratio hit 7.16% in Oct., BSP reports

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BAD LOAN RATIO OF commercial banks dropped to a new eight-year low of 7.16 percent at the end of October from 7.43 percent at end-September, as the growth in loan portfolio outpaced the expansion of soured assets, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas reported yesterday.

Of the banking system's total non-performing loans, including those of thrift banks, about 9 percent represented past due credit card receivables while about 1.9 percent were past due auto loans.

Based on the latest BSP report, the banking industry's credit card lending that had fallen past due accounted for 19.3 percent of total plastic-based receivables, while past due auto loans accounted for 5 percent of total vehicle loans as of end-September, relatively steady from their respective ratios of 19.2 percent and 5.04 percent at end-June.

"The marginal increase in ratio from last quarter was driven by the relatively faster incidence of credit card receivables turning past due at 6.1 percent compared with the growth rate in total credit card receivables," a BSP report said.

In general, the banking system's stock of bad loans has fallen to its lowest level in eight years. It peaked at 18.81 percent in October 2001. The slowdown was aided by the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) law that allowed banks to get rid of over P100 billion in bad assets.

The SPV Law waived some of the taxes and reduced fees usually collected in the sale or transfer of assets. It scrapped the documentary stamp tax, capital gains tax and expanded value added tax, and reduced registration and transfer fees by 50 percent. Congress has passed a law extending its effectivity for two more years.

As of end-October, the BSP said commercial banks' NPLs declined by 0.63 percent, while total loan portfolio went up by 3.15 percent. In peso terms, the sector's NPLs thus amounted to P142.2 billion as against the total loan portfolio of P1.99 trillion.

Also, real and other properties acquired (ropa) as a ratio of gross assets slid by 0.06 percentage points to 4.39 percent from 4.45 percent last month as growth in gross assets overwhelmed the increase in the stock of idle assets.

Thus, the industry's non-performing assets as a ratio of total assets likewise narrowed by 0.18 percentage point to 7.5 percent from 7.68 percent last month, fueled by the increase in total assets.

Land me your ear

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III



FOR THE RECORD, THE GOVERNMENT OF Quezon City is giving way to the "appeal" of homeowners associations concerning the P2-billion project of Federal Land.

The company is putting up a high-rise condominium, called Capital Tower, on E. Rodriguez Sr. Avenue, a few kilometers from St. Luke's Medical Center.

But residents of Montgomery Place (a project of Ayala Land, which is planning to do the expansion phase) complained to the Quezon City government against the Federal Land project.

They claimed that the project could add strain to the infrastructure in the area, particularly traffic, water supply and sewerage.

Thus they are asking the city government to force Federal Land to change its design, perhaps even downscale the whole project.

But the question before the city council is, how can people tell others what to do with their property?

Now, according to our spies in city hall, Quezon City Mayor Feliciano "Sonny" Belmonte, plus most of the councilors, already wanted to approve the project.

But because of the so-called "concerns" aired, supposedly, by residents of Montgomery Place, city hall is lending them an ear in public hearings.

Still, word has it that the city council also intends to look at the economics of the real estate project, particularly the high property tax payments that it can generate.

The rest of Metro Manila is going for high-rise structures, which brings up the value of real estate, which in turn means higher income for the local governments.

Majority of the members of the Quezon City council, according to my spy, feel that the city cannot afford to go against such a trend.

If only for that, the sentiment in the city council seems to go with Federal Land. The council just wants the company to address the concerns of residents in the area.

In fact, the city government has already granted permits for high-rise structures to the SM group, which built a high-rise condominium in Quezon City.

And so, if the city council denies the same thing to Federal Land, it may be inviting court cases.

Moreover, in the development business for the past 30 years or so, Federal Land has a good track record in high-rise development.

For instance, it converted a blighted area in barangay Valencia in Quezon City into a high-rise compound. The company even solved the flooding problem in the area.

It is doubtful that the company will do anything to ruin its reputation.

For all government employees—the more than one million of you who are forced to become members of the GSIS—the Pasig City Regional Trial Court has a little Christmas gift.

The court just ruled that the GSIS should give up P1.12 billion of your pension fund—just like that!

The order is one of garnishment. It authorized the sheriff of Pasig City, a certain Cresenciano Rabello Jr., to get the GSIS fund amounting to P1.12 billion deposited in certain banks.

The money will then go to a certain Rosario Enriquez-Santiago, who is a private claimant in a case, after she took over from her late husband, Eduardo Santiago, who in turn only took over from the original petitioners, namely, Jose Zulueta and Soledad Ramos. Whew!

Anyway, the GSIS management of course went straight to the Supreme Court to try to block the RTC robbery... este, ruling.

The Supreme Court already ruled on exactly the same case many years ago.

Many years ago, Jose Zulueta and Soledad Ramos borrowed money from the GSIS. They also forgot to repay their debts.

So the GSIS foreclosed on real estate properties that the two put up as collateral for the loans. Guess what, the GSIS foreclosed the WRONG properties.

The two borrowers thus sued GSIS, asking for the return of 78 lots that the GSIS foreclosed by mistake. The Supreme Court then ordered the GSIS to return the 78 lots. Or the GSIS could also just pay for the lots.

And so, to follow the Supreme Court order, GSIS started to give back the lots to the claimant, who for some reasons became Eduardo Santiago and, subsequently, his wife Rosario.

At present, the GSIS already returned 63 lots, out of the 78 lots that it foreclosed.

And here's a surprise: The Court of Appeals, which by the way is also deeply involved in the case by some mysterious force of the universe, made another ruling, in effect, reversing the ruling of the Supreme Court. Wow!

Anyway, the CA ordered the GSIS to just forget about returning the properties. The CA ruled that the GSIS should just pay for the lots. As a bonus, the CA ordered the Pasig RTC to execute its ruling right away.

Even before the value of the property could be determined, boss?

Well, the CA ruled that, while the Pasig RTC tried to find out the market value of the lots, the GSIS should just give the claimants only P400 million, for starters.

The GSIS surely questioned the CA ruling, arguing that the GSIS already returned 63 lots, which should therefore be excluded from the payment.

While the GSIS was busy fighting the CA, lo and behold, the Pasig RTC ordered the garnishment of some P1.12 billion of GSIS funds deposited in banks.

Question: Where in the air did the figure of P1.12 billion come from? Well, only heaven knows! And perhaps the judge in the case!

Every first Friday of the month at the Gold Crest car park at the Ayala Center (along Arnaiz Avenue), and every third Friday at the Alabang Town Center, you will find the WASTE TRADING MARKETS!

There you can trade scrap paper for new paper or used ink cartridges for new ones, and sell electronic junk (i.e., computers and broken appliances) and used lead acid batteries, and reed for cash such waste as PET plastic bottles and other plastics, aluminum and tin cans, and scrap glass.

Drop off points also provided for junk cellular phones and their batteries, plus waste styrofoam.

It is all part of the "recycling" movement.

P900M eyed for SM mall in Bacolod

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SM PRIME HOLDINGS INC. OF Henry Sy—one of the richest men in the world, according to Forbes Magazine—will be spending roughly P900 million for its 28th mall in Bacolod in March.

The new mall will span a total area of 60,000 square meters, sources said.

Proof that the group remains bullish on how the retail market will fare in the near term, SM Prime earlier said it would hike its 2007 budget for new malls and land acquisition to between P6 and P7 billion.

Prior to its launch of Mall of Asia, the country's largest mall, publicly listed SM Prime used to spend an average of P5 billion a year for new malls.

Apart from the mall in Bacolod

City, SM retail establishments are also being constructed in Taytay town and Muntinlupa City, both in Metro Manila. The projects are being financed with a combination of borrowings and internally generated cash.

This year, SM Prime has opened five malls: SM Lipa in Batangas, SM City Sta. Rosa, SM City Clark, SM Mall of Asia and SM Supercenter Pasig. The new malls would bring SM Prime's total malls to 27. The malls have expanded the company's gross floor area to 3.6 million square meters.

In a related development, SM Investments Corp., which controls 53 percent of SM Prime, said it has christened its urban development project at the Manila Bay where its biggest mall is located.

SMIC has spent P2 billion on infrastructure in the 60-hectare

area, and will spend some P3.5 billion for the development of its business process outsourcing facility dubbed OneE-com Center and SMX Convention Center. Both projects will be completed by the third quarter next year.

SM Prime on the other hand has spent P7 billion for its Mall of Asia development.

SM BayCity is a 60-hectare lot which has been earmarked for development into a business district. It is home to the world's third largest mall, the SM Mall of Asia, and corporate offices of SM Investments and its subsidiaries.

In addition to the mall, SM BayCity will see the development of offices, an exhibition and convention center, a sports arena, a row of hotels facing the bay, and a commercial ferry terminal.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 18, 2006)					
STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	7.4	7.5	7.4	7.4	22,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	44	44.5	44	44.5	864,500
Bank of the Phil. Islands	64.5	65.5	64	65	2,217,600
China Banking Corp.	695	700	695	695	5,420
Citibank Savings Bank	19	19	19	19	4,000
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.48	0.49	0.48	0.49	3,600,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	79	80	79	79.5	102,200
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	51	52.5	51	52	7,020,500
Philippine National Bank	43.5	44.5	43	44	81,600
Phil. Savings Bank	25	25.5	25	25.5	206,000
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	66	67.5	66	67.5	292,200
Security Bank Corp.	59	59	59	59	11,500
Union Bank of the Phil.	5.3	5.5	5.3	5.5	2,357,000
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
CitiSecoline Con. Inc.	5.3	5.5	5.3	5.5	330,000
First Abacus Financial	0.65	0.65	0.5	0.5	2,500
First Metro Invest. Corp.	30	30.5	30	30.5	540
Manulife Financial Corp.	1640	1640	1640	1640	2,500
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.32	1.32	1.32	1.32	4,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	272.5	280	270	270	66,410
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2070	2085	2070	2085	1,700
Intavante Corp.	1.5	1.56	1.5	1.56	635,000
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
PNOC Energy Dev. Corp.	4.35	4.53	4.35	4.55	102,217,000
First Gen Corp.	52.5	53	52	53	982,400
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	59.5	61.5	59.5	61	287,200
Manila Electric Co. A	53	54.5	53	54	663,800
Manila Electric Co. B	9.8	9.9	9.7	9.8	1,872,000
Manila Water Co. Inc.	4.15	4.15	4.1	4.15	3,141,000
Petroneer Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.29	0.29	1,350,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.16	1.18	1.16	1.16	3,549,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.7	3.8	3.7	3.8	200,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	21.25	21.25	21	21.25	22,200
Julibee Foods Corp.	41	41.5	40.5	41	463,500
RFM Corp.	1	1.04	1	1.04	188,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.65	2.7	2.65	2.7	17,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	80,000
San Miguel Corp. A	65.5	66	65.5	66	84,400
San Miguel Corp. B	71	72	71	72	4,040,000
Alliance Tuna Int'l. Inc.	2.26	2.26	2.16	2.16	1,579,000
Universal Robina Corp.	19.5	19.75	19.5	19.75	2,718,300
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	1.12	1.16	1.12	1.14	8,871,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	3.25	3.25	3.2	3.2	946,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	9,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	8	8.1	7.8	7.8	2,746,000
Phil Nat'l Const. Corp.	6.5	6.5	6.4	6.5	39,000
Republic Cement Corp.	4	4	4	4	15,000
CHEMICALS					
Chemrez Technologies Inc.	5.2	5.6	5.2	5.4	15,242,000
Interphil Labs Inc. A	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	70,000
Interphil Labs Inc. B	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99	10,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.62	0.62	0.62	0.62	50,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Geograce Res. Phil. Inc.	0.74	0.76	0.71	0.73	44,300,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.2	0.235	0.195	0.23	89,530,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Asia Amalgamated Holdings	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.45	50,000
Atok-Big Wedge Co. Inc.	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	3,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.008	0.0095	0.008	0.009	444,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.008	0.0095	0.008	0.0095	50,000,000
Ayala Corp.	495	500	495	500	237,480
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.68	0.68	0.66	0.66	300,000
Alsons Equity Ventures	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	2,437,000
Ajo Net Holdings Inc.	0.06	0.06	0.0575	0.06	23,400,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.85	2.85	2.8	2.85	457,000
APC Group Inc.	0.39	0.41	0.39	0.4	24,440,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.01	0.011	20,800,000
Autopac Phil Holdings Corp.	1.06	1.1	1.04	1.06	9,428,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.88	1.88	1.88	1.88	10,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	3	3	3	3	56,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	1.14	1.14	1.14	1.14	60,000
Banolan Cons Indus Inc.	9.4	9.5	9	9	20,000
Benres Holdings Corp.	2.2	2.22	2.2	2.2	1,841,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	6.3	6.3	6.2	6.3	2,082,000
Flmwest Dev. Corp.	3.55	3.65	3.55	3.65	2,637,000
F&I Princ. E Holdings Corp.	0.9	0.94	0.9	0.94	390,000
House Of Investments Inc.	1.88	1.88	1.88	1.88	14,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	9.5	9.5	9.5	9.8	2,360,000
Medco Holdings	0.26	0.26	0.25	0.25	380,000
Mabuhay Holdings Corp.	0.32	0.34	0.32	0.34	500,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	4.25	4.3	4.1	4.1	240,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	1.6	1.64	1.58	1.62	1,917,000
Pacific	0.02	0.022	0.02	0.022	98,400,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.205	0.205	0.205	0.205	400,000
Pine Hill Holdings Inc.	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.96	10,000
Sinopharm Corp.	0.16	0.165	0.16	0.165	7,248,000
SM Investments Corp.	297.5	302.5	297.5	300	251,320
South China Resources Inc.	1.02	1.02	1	1	370,000
Seafrost Resources Corp.	1.68	1.68	1.62	1.62	137,000
Unimil Res. & Holdings Co	0.235	0.235	0.235	0.235	63,000,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	1,490,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	15	15.5	15	15.25	14,164,800
Belle Corp.	1.14	1.14	1.14	1.14	3,016,000
A Brown Company Inc.	1.7	1.7	1.64	1.66	424,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.42	0.43	0.42	0.42	3,170,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	3.3	3.3	3.2	3.3	143,000
C. P. Homes Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	10,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.32	0.34	0.32	0.34	2,210,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.175	0.22	0.175	0.22	610,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.55	0.55	0.54	0.55	4,920,000
Ever-Goteco Resources	0.065	0.065	0.0625	0.0625	4,300,000
Galeo Land Inc.	1.85	1.86	1.84	1.84	7,455,000
Gotesco Land Inc.	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.11	90,000
Interport Res.	0.009	0.01	0.009	0.01	567,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.009	0.01	0.009	0.01	349,000,000
Kinohill Prop. Inc.	1.28	1.28	1.28	1.28	6,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.53	0.53	0.5	0.51	3,670,000
Fl-Estate Land Inc.	0.69	0.7	0.69	0.7	200,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.015	0.015	0.015	0.015	2,000,000
Megaworld Corp.	2.26	2.26	2.26	2.26	34,858,000
Metro Pacific Inv. Corp.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	10,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.38	0.38	0.36	0.38	1,470,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.15	0.165	0.15	0.165	6,200,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	16	16	15.75	15.75	4,162,400
Phil Realty And Holdings	0.71	0.72	0.68	0.69	25,270,000
SM Development Corp.	2.6	2.6	2.55	2.55	1,480,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	9.9	10.25	9.9	10.25	20,637,000
Suntrust Home Dev. Inc.	0.6	0.6	0.59	0.59	280,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.11	0.12	0.11	0.115	12,030,000
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	21	21	21	21	21,400
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.9	2.02	1.9	1.94	36,373,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	1250	1250	1235	1235	28,380
Philpino Tel. Corp.	6.2	6.4	6.2	6.4	9,939,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	2430	2455	2430	2435	164,130
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.19	0.195	0.19	0.19	6,300,000
Imperial Res.	0.018	0.021	0.018	0.021	133,600,000
Ionics Inc.	2.18	2.2	2.18	2.18	388,000
PGS Corp.	4.2	4.4	4.2	4.3	2,870,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.0575	0.0575	0.0575	0.0575	3,100,000
Musmic Semiconductors Corp.	1.34	1.36	1.3	1.3	280,000
Transpacific Broadband	0.51	0.51	0.49	0.49	5,864,000
Philweb Corp.	0.031	0.032	0.031	0.032	60,200,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	4.15	4.2	4.15	4.2	711,000
Abotiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.24	1.24	1.24	1.24	245,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	19.25	19.25	19	19	1,278,200
Lorinser Shipping Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.22	53,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	2.18	2.18	2.14	2.16	1,063,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	1,110,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.6	0.6	0.59	0.59	770,000
EDUCATION					
Centro Escolar University	9	9	8.8	8.8	9,000
Far Eastern University	800	800	800	800	220
iPeople Inc.	3	3	3	3	284,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	2.08	2.12	2.08	2.1	578,000
Paxys Inc.	19	19	19	19	546,100
MINING					
Aper Mining Co. Inc. A	5.9	6	5.8	5.8	3,219,000
Aper Mining Co. Inc. B	6.1	6.1	5.9	5.9	1,721,000
Atlas Mining & Industrial	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.012	278,100,000
Abas Cons. Min & Dev'l	10	10.5	9.8	9.8	8,188,000
Benquet Corp. A	9.5	9.5	9.2	9.2	135,000
Benquet Corp. B	24.75	25	24.75	25	6,000,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.25	0.26	0.25	0.25	25,300,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.28	0.28	0.27	0.28	3,990,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.023	0.023	0.022	0.022	460,800,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.026	0.026	0.026	0.026	198,000,000
Omico Corp.	0.012	0.012	0.011	0.012	1,511,900,000
Philex Mining Corp.	4.2	4.2	4.1	4.1	4,374,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	19	19.25	19	19	61,900
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.79	0.85	0.79	0.84	15,540,000
Vulcan Ind. Inc.	1.58	1.72	1.54	1.72	36,181,000
OIL					
Basic Petroleum Corp.	0.3	0.31	0.3	0.3	2,370,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	180,900,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.012	0.012	0.011	0.011	198,000,000
The Philodril Corp. A	1.06	1.08	1.02	1.06	4,133,000
The Philodril Corp. B	1.02	1.08	1.02	1.08	1,558,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	10.25	10.75	10	10	524,000

ADVICE TO BSP

Go slow on interest rate cut

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS HAS been urged to avoid swift cuts in its key policy rates to lessen volatility pressures on the peso to be caused by the coming elections.

Regional financial giant Development Bank of Singapore said in an assessment of the Philippines that a substantial and immediate rate cut by the BSP next year might aggravate possible capital flight resulting from an uncertain economic environment.

A reduction in the local interest rate narrows its gap with US interest rates. A narrow differential and perceptions of increased risks in markets like the Philippines encourage investors to transfer investments.

DBS suggested that should the BSP cut its interest rate next year from the current 7.5

percent, it should be paced with that of the US Fed's possible rate cut.

"Rate cuts by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) may create some discomfort about narrowing the peso's spread advantage over the US dollar," DBS said. "(But) BSP rate cuts should not undermine the peso if they are paced with the US rate easing we expect in (the first half of 2007)," DBS added.

The BSP retained its 7.5-percent overnight borrowing rate in the latest meeting of the policy-making Monetary Board last month, although it implemented a tiering scheme wherein deposits with the BSP in excess of threshold levels get lower interest rates.

While the BSP did not reduce its key policy rate outright, some analysts expect the monetary authority to do so next year amid a continued decline in inflation. Consumer prices

rose by only 4.7 percent in November from a year ago, slowing down from 5.4 percent the previous month.

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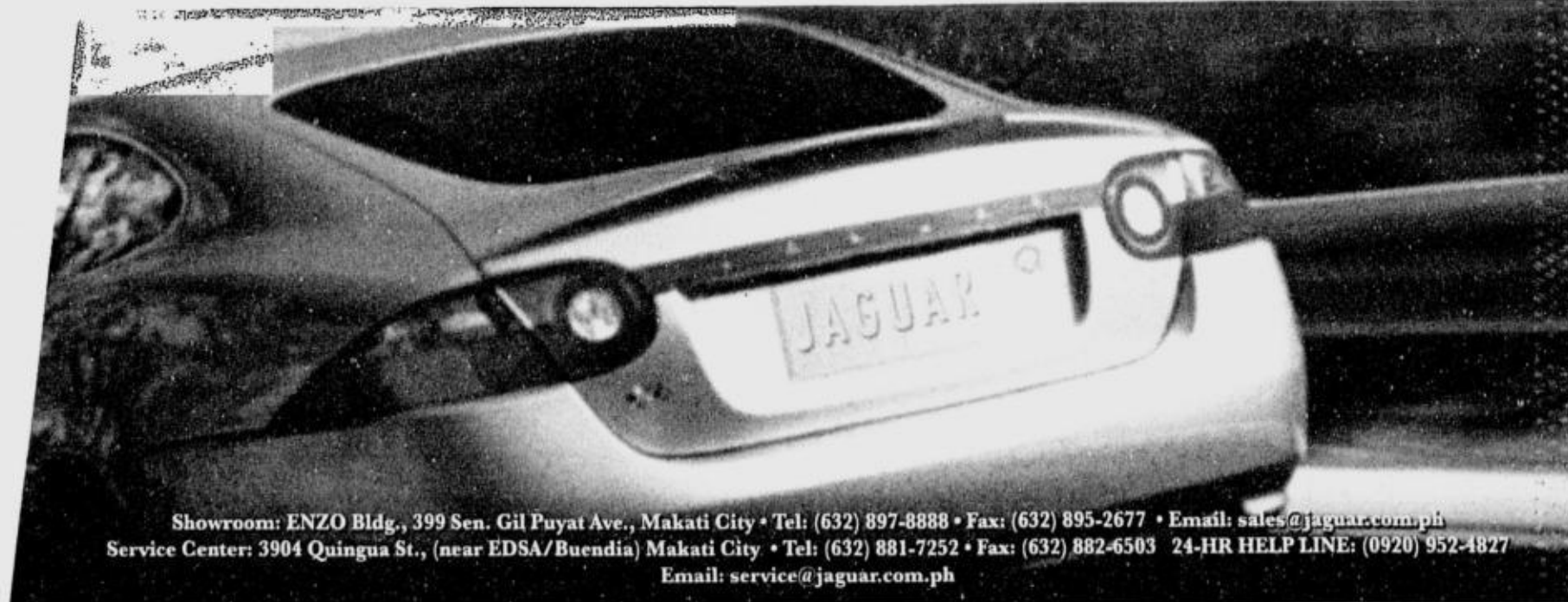
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NOTICE OF TENDER OFFER TO THE STOCKHOLDERS OF VISAYAN ELECTRIC COMPANY, INC. (VECO)

To All Stockholders of VISAYAN ELECTRIC COMPANY, INC. ("VECO"):

Please be informed that on December 15, 2006, VECO filed a Tender Offer Statement (SEC Form 19-1) with the Securities and Exchange Commission (the "SEC") pursuant to Section 19 of the Securities Regulation Code in connection with its intention to acquire, at the price of Php 500.00 per share, 400,000 common shares of stock of VECO owned by stockholders constituting approximately 5.23% of the outstanding capital stock of VECO with par value of Php 200.00 per share. The consideration is payable in check not later than ten (10) business days after the termination of the tender offer ("Payment Date"), provided, however, that if any payment of the consideration is due on a day which is not a Business Day, such payment shall be due on the next succeeding Business Day. For this purpose, "Business Day" shall mean any day excluding (i) Saturday, (ii) Sunday and (iii) any day on which commercial banks in Cebu City, Philippines are authorized or required by law or other government action to close, or (iv) any legal holiday.

Stockholders as of November 30, 2006 (the "Record Date") may tender all or a portion of their VECO common shares for acceptance and purchase by VECO, subject to the Terms of the Tender Offer, beginning at 9:00 a.m. of December 19, 2006 until 3:00 p.m. of January 22, 2007 (the "Tender Offer Period").

Tendering stockholders of VECO who hold stock certificates should submit within the Tender Offer Period their duly endorsed stock certificates and two (2) copies of duly accomplished Application to Sell Shares, together with the following requirements to Tender Offer Staff at VECO Complex, J. Panis Street, Banilad, Cebu City with telephone no. (32)230-8326 (Contact Person: Ms. Jessel Traverso):

For corporate stockholders:

1. Certified copies of the Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws of the stockholder and latest amendment/s thereof.
2. A notarized Secretary's Certificate setting forth resolutions of the tendering stockholder's Board of Directors authorizing the tender and sale of VECO shares and designating the signatories for the purpose.
3. A duly accomplished signature card containing the specimen signatures of its authorized signatories validated by its Corporate Secretary and verified by an officer of the bank where it is maintaining an account.

For individual stockholders:

1. Two (2) valid identification cards containing the specimen signature of the stockholder.
2. For stockholders acting through an attorney-in-fact, a duly notarized Special Power of Attorney. (N.B.: Endorsement of stock certificate/s must be made by the stockholder himself).

The Tender Offer Staff will submit the stock certificates for validation to the Office of the Corporate Secretary of VECO, c/o Atty. M. Jasmine S. Oporto, Aboitiz Corporate Center, Gov. M. Cuenco Avenue, Kasambagan, Cebu City, with telephone number (32) 231-2580. Defective applications (such as but not limited to those where there is a discrepancy between the specimen signatures on file and the endorsement) must be corrected within the tender offer period to avoid rejection. Hence, stockholders are strongly urged to tender their shares at the earliest possible time to ensure that any defect in the Application to Sell Shares may still be corrected. Stockholders are also urged to provide or indicate their telephone or contact numbers in their respective application forms to allow the Tender Offer Staff and Office of the Corporate Secretary to inform them immediately of any deficiency in their applications.

Tendering stockholders shall have the right to withdraw any tendered VECO common shares at any time during the Tender Offer Period or, if the tendered VECO shares have not been accepted for payment, up to sixty (60) days from commencement of the Tender Offer Period. For a withdrawal to be effective, a written notice of withdrawal must be timely received by the Tender Offer Staff at their addresses set forth above. The notice must specify the name of the tendering stockholder, the number of VECO shares to be withdrawn and the stock certificate numbers of the stocks covered by the withdrawal. The Tender Offer Staff or Corporate Secretary shall have the right in its sole discretion, to determine the sufficiency of the notice of withdrawal and the timeliness thereof.

The Tender Offer is further subject to the terms and conditions described in the Terms of the Tender Offer. Copies of the SEC Form 19-1 and the tender offer application kit may be obtained by VECO stockholders from the Tender Offer Staff.

This Notice is published in compliance with Section 19 of the Securities Regulation Code. Copies of this Notice, along with the Application to Sell Shares and the attachments shall be sent to the stockholders by post and/or private courier.

The external auditor of VECO, C. L. Manabat & Co., has confirmed that resources are available to satisfy full acceptance of the shares to be offered.

NOTE: YOU MAY CONSULT YOUR LEGAL AND/OR FINANCIAL ADVISER OR DIRECT INQUIRIES OR REQUESTS FOR CLARIFICATION TO THE TENDER OFFER STAFF OR THE OFFICE OF THE CORPORATE SECRETARY.

VISAYAN ELECTRIC COMPANY, INC.

By:

(Sgd.) **DENNIS N. A. GARCIA**
President

(PDI - December 19, 20 & 21, 2006)

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Philippine Health Insurance Corporation, PhilHealth Regional Office IX, Zamboanga City, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

Name of Project : **LEASE OF OFFICE SPACE**
Location : **Zamboanga City**
Brief Description :

1. Minimum office space requirement is eight hundred eighty (880) square meters with a ground floor area of at least two hundred thirty (230) square meters
2. With elevator if made up of more than two (2) storeys
3. With adequate comfort rooms
4. With parking space that can accommodate at least twenty (20) cars and forty (40) motorcycles
5. Located along the road within the city proper
6. Free water supply
7. With installed automatic fire sprinkler system, fire hydrants and fire extinguishers and with adequate fire exits
8. Available electrical connections capable of handling an adequate number of air conditioning units (window type and floor mounted) suitable to the size of the office space
9. With installed electric meter and lights
10. Available telephone connections
11. With network cable set-up capability
12. With Wide Area Network (WAN) connection from PLDT
13. With stand-by generator to supply power for all office equipment and airconditioning units

Approved Budget
for the Contract : **Four Million Two Hundred Fifty Five Thousand Pesos (P4,255,000.00)**
Contract Duration : **February 1, 2007 to December 31, 2008**

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last two (2) years with an amount of at least 50% of the proposed project for bidding (largest single contract). The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bid Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR).

The complete schedule of activities is listed as follows:

Activities	Schedule
1. Date of Publication	December 12 & 19, 2006
2. Issuance of Bid Documents	December 12, 2006
3. Pre-bid Conference	December 22, 2006 @ 1:00 p.m.
4. Last Submission of Bids	January 8, 2007 @ 12:00 noon
5. Opening of Bids and Bid Evaluation	January 8, 2007 @ 1:00 p.m.
6. Post-qualification	January 15, 2007
7. Notice of Award	January 22, 2007

Bid Documents will be available only to prospective bidder upon payment of a non-refundable amount of Two Thousand Pesos (Php 2,000.00) to the Cashier of PRO IX.

The PRO IX assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

(Sgd.) **DR. ROSANNA P. PARAGUYA**
Chairperson, BAC PRO IX

(PDI - December 12 & 19, 2006)

Asian Development Bank-Japan Scholarship Program Funded by the Government of Japan

Qualified citizens of developing member countries of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), who intend to pursue postgraduate studies in economics, management, science and technology, and other development-related fields are invited to apply for scholarships under the Asian Development Bank-Japan Scholarship Program. Upon successful completion of the graduate program, the scholars are expected to return to their countries and contribute to its socioeconomic development. Scholarships are awarded for graduate studies at designated institutions in courses of study approved by ADB. The Program especially welcomes qualified women applicants who have limited financial means to obtain university education.

The Scholarships

Level of Education: postgraduate (diploma, masters, and doctorate degrees)

Duration: from 1 to 2 years

Coverage: tuition fees, books, subsistence and housing allowance, insurance, economy airfare, and research subsidy

Academic Institutions

- Australia—National Centre for Development Studies/Australian National University, University of Melbourne, University of Sydney
- China, People's Republic of—University of Hong Kong
- India—Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi
- Japan—International University of Japan, Nagoya University (Graduate School of International Development), Keio University (International Graduate Programs on Advanced Science and Technology), National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies, Ritsumeikan University (Master in Economics), Saitama University (Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering), University of Tokyo (Department of Civil Engineering, School of International Health, Institute of Environmental Studies, and Department of Urban Engineering)

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- New Zealand—University of Auckland
- Pakistan—Lahore University of Management Sciences
- Philippines—Asian Institute of Management, International Rice Research Institute/University of the Philippines in Los Baños
- Singapore—National University of Singapore
- Thailand—Asian Institute of Technology, Thammasat University
- USA—East-West Center

Eligibility Requirements

Prospective applicants must:

- be a citizen of an ADB developing member country
 - have at least 2 years work experience
 - have gained admission to an approved course in a designated institution
 - proficient in oral and written English
 - be in good health
 - not more than 35 years old at the time of application.
- (Staff of ADB and the designated institutions and their close relatives are not eligible to apply.)

Application Requirements

Applicants should obtain application forms from the designated institutions of their choice and submit the completed form and required documentation to the Institution. Applicants should indicate on the application form that they wish to be considered for an Asian Development Bank-Japan Scholarship. (ADB will select the scholars from among those admitted by the institutions. A separate application to ADB is not necessary.) For further information, visit the ADB-JSP website.



Our Dearly Beloved
Jimmy W. Tan

Executive Vice President of
 Davao Wesscon Trade Corporation
 and Director of
 LKT Realty Development Corporation

*Peacefully joined our Lord
 on December 17, 2006 at the age of 49.*

His bereaved family: father **Raul Tanchin** (†); mother **Wee Siok Dan**; sister **Susan**; brothers & sisters-in-law **Gilbert & Marilou, Wilson & Nancy, Michael & Marivic, Richard & Maritess, Winston & Corinn, Jefferson & Jennifer**, nephews, nieces, relatives & friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Cosmopolitan Funeral Homes, Camus St., Davao City.

Interment will be on December 21, 2006, 9:00am at the Davao Memorial Park after the 7:00 a.m. Mass at the Cosmopolitan Chapel.

*God took her home, it was His will,
 but in our hearts she liveth still...*

TO COMMEMORATE THE

4th Death
 ANNIVERSARY

of

Norma Tuason Chua

(March 15, 1946 - December 20, 2002)

MASSSES WILL BE OFFERED FOR THE ETERNAL REPOSE OF HER SOUL
 ON WEDNESDAY, 20 DECEMBER 2006 AT THE FOLLOWING CHURCHES:

Monasterio de Santa Clara - Kalipunan Road, Quezon City	6:00 a.m.
Santuario de San Antonio - Forbes Park, Makati City	6:15 a.m.
National Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes - Retiro Street, Quezon City	6:30 a.m.
San Agustin Church - Intramuros, Manila	6:30 a.m.
Malate Catholic Church - Malate, Manila	7:00 a.m.
Manila Metropolitan Cathedral - Intramuros, Manila	7:30 a.m.
Santo Domingo Parish - Quezon Avenue, Quezon City	12:15 p.m.
Christ the King Church - E. Rodriguez Boulevard, Quezon City	6:00 p.m.
Shrine of Our Lady of Mount Carmel - New Manila, Quezon City	6:00 p.m.
Santuario de San Pedro Bautista - San Francisco Del Monte, Quezon City	6:00 p.m.
Monasterio de Santa Clara - Balanga, Bataan	6:00 p.m.
Saint Andrew the Apostle Parish - Bel-Air II, Makati City	6:30 p.m.
Abbey of Our Lady of Montserrat - Mendiola, Manila	8:30 p.m.

Her loving husband, **Eddie**; and daughter, **Eileen**; request the relatives, friends, and people whose lives she has touched to offer a prayer for her soul. Her family also conveys sincere appreciation and gratitude to all who sympathized, remember, offer mass and prayers, and keep **Norma** alive in their memories and hearts.

"Eternal rest grant unto her, O Lord.

And let perpetual light shine upon her. May she rest in peace. Amen."

**NORBERTO "TOTI"
 VELOSO BALCE**

Passed on peacefully in his sleep
 on December 16, 2006,
 in Vancouver to His Father's
 Kingdom
 Please pray for his soul.



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OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:
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 • Any identification document (I.D.)

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 picture can be a fitting
 tribute to your
 departed loved one.*

Gregorio Po

of Mo. Ignacia St., South Triangle, Quezon City
 #12 Cavite St., Quezon City

*Peacefully joined his Creator
 on December 16, 2006 at the age of 83.*

His loving wife **Susana**; children and children-in-law **Rita & Armando, Gloria & Mariano, Emilia & Nonito, Samuel & Kak Uan, Helen**; and grandchildren **Dick, Dave & Joyce, Denisson, Patrick, Bethany, Geraldine, Eunice, Jill, Ken, Karl, Stephanie, Kemp & Sheryl**.

Relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Sanctuary (Chapel Rose Garden), No. 739 G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Cremation will be today, December 19, 2006 at 1pm and inurnment will be at the Sanctuary Columbarium on Thursday, December 21, 2006 at 10 am.

CLASSIFIEDS

UPGRADE 2007

The 18th UP Diliman job fair

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES DILIMAN Office of Counseling and Guidance (UP OCG) in partnership with the UP Junior Philippine Institute of Accountants (UP JPIA) is now organizing UPGRADE 2007, the 18th University Job Fair and is inviting interested companies to take part in this project.

UPGRADE 2007 is an event designed to benefit both companies and students by providing a common ground between the country's cream of the crop and leading companies. The event would be pushing through on January 22 to 26,

year 2007 from 8:00am - 5:00pm at the Ang Bahay ng Alumni, UP Campus, Diliman and will be attended by graduating students from all courses.

The organizers will gladly welcome any inquiries regarding this event through the following: Tel: No./Fax No.: 926.4162 or Tel. No.: 929.5835 or e-mail: upjobfair2007@gmail.com. You may also contact us through any of the following: 0927-3303691 (Beth), 0918-6160885 (DK), 0916-4460329 (Theresa), 0927-6064730 (Maila), 0917-6100684 (Kristy).

DOLE encourages 'worktrepreneurs' to be source of progress for economy

LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT SECRETARY Arturo D. Brion has encouraged the "worktrepreneurs" comprising the economy's informal sector (IS) to work for the kind of standards that will make them a source of progress for the country, and help in the national efforts to stave off poverty.

Worktrepreneurs are referred to as informal sector workers who work and provide labor services, at the same time engaged in small businesses and livelihood, or entrepreneurship.

Brion, in this light, urged the business sector of the country to find ways and means by which they may uplift the self-employed workers. "By devoting their energies positively to uplift the disadvantaged sector, they are showing that even business has a social conscience, and thus in the process will bequeath the best in corporate social responsibility."

The Labor Chief's message was delivered in his behalf by Labor Undersecretary for Policy, Programs, and International Affairs Arturo L. Sodusta during the recent Regional Summit for the Informal Sector (IS) in San Pablo City, Laguna attended by more than 300 stakeholders, under the aegis of the DOLE's Region IV-A Office headed by DOLE Region IV-A Director Ricardo Martinez, Sr.

During the Summit, Presidential Adviser of Transportation, Secretary Ariel Lim, Governor Ayong Malicsi of Cavite, IS representative Josephine Parilla, and key representatives of Laguna local government units (LGUs), manifested their support to IS.

The Summit also highlighted the ongoing showcase IS projects of the DOLE in partnership with the LGUs to assist informal communities in Angono, Rizal and in the Province of Cavite.

Brion, in his speech read by Sodusta, said, "Let us make business work for the poor by making the IS sector a catalyst and engine of the country's growth rather than a source of poverty."

He said that in this light, the disadvantaged IS workers must be considered as the country's "worktrepreneurs," and must be assisted in attaining fair conditions and standards, as well as in being the productive managers of their own small businesses or livelihood endeavors.

In the course of reading the speech, Sodusta assured the IS sector stakeholders of the DOLE's unwavering support to study, assist, and uplift the country's IS community.

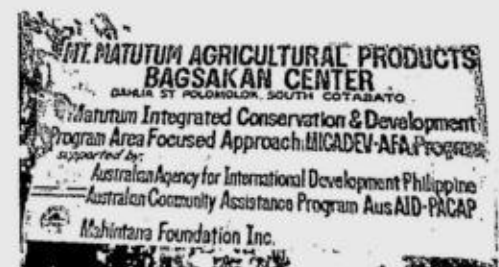
"Secretary Brion is a champion of the country's informal sector workers due to the implementation of the concrete thrusts to assist you set in motion by the government and stakeholders," he said.

Conservation project reaps livelihood for South Cotabato folks

EFFORTS TO PROTECT MT. MATUTUM FROM exploitation are now giving better income opportunities to 6000 families of the towns of South Cotabato and some barangays of the Sarangani provinces.

According to Mr. Rod Villanueva, Area Manager of the Philippines-Australia Assistance Program (PACAP), Mt. Matutum is a premium water source of South Cotabato, Sarangani Provinces and General Santos City. It also supports and sustains the domestic and commercial agricultural production of the growth area of the said provinces. However, due to no clear environmental guidelines on how to preserve the volcano's resources, its forested areas were destroyed by illegal logging, mining, migration, agricultural land conversions and forest fires. These resulted not only to deforestation but also to extinction of wildlife and flashfloods, particularly in General Santos City, and shortage of water supply to households, farm lands and industries.

Through the partnership of the Philippines-Australia Assistance Community Program (PACAP) with non-government organizations such as the Mahintana Foundation and people's organizations such as the Samahan ng Magsasaka sa Timog Kutabato and the Landan People's Multi-purpose Cooperative, the Mt. Matutum Integrated Conservation and Development Program (MICADEV) was implemented not only to rehabilitate the thinning forest cover of Mt. Matutum but also to provide livelihood assistance. Thus, 4000 hectares of the land area were declared as Strictly Protected Zones while some 10,000 hectares were designated for responsible sustainable farm-based



livelihood activities. Through the MICADEV program, the South Cotabato folks, particularly those from the town of Polomolok, were guided to grow high value fruit trees as durian, mangosteen, rambutan, lanzones, guava, pineapple and banana aside from corn that they grow to serve as staple food.

Today, the fruit bearing trees of Mt. Matutum are providing its farmers with livelihood based on fruit trade and food processing. In addition, neighboring towns such as Tupi, Tampakan and Malunog have completed the trade network by serving as wholesalers or "Baggaskan Centers".

Aside from livelihood assistance and environmental conservation, PACAP's MICADEV program provides the towns of South Cotabato with basic social services, organizational development for those who implement the program, infrastructure support, micro-financing for the purchase of equipment, networking and linkages, monitoring, and training such as in the areas of organic farming, integrated pest management and sloping agricultural land technology.

PACAP is a program of the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID).



Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr.
and the
Members of the House of Representatives

mourn the passing away of a distinguished colleague

HON. LUIS P. BERSAMIN, JR.

in the 12th and 13th Congress

on Saturday, December 16, 2006 at the age of 62.

His remains will be brought from Funeraria Paz, Araneta Avenue, to the Plenary Hall, House of Representatives, Batasan Hills, Quezon City, for a Requiem Mass and Necrological Services at 10:00 a.m. today, December 19, 2006.

After the Requiem Mass and Necrological Services at the House of Representatives, his body will be transferred back to Funeraria Paz, Araneta Avenue, where he will lie in state until December 20, 2006.

On December 21, 2006, his remains will be brought to the family residence at Rizal Street corner Santiago Street, Bangued, Abra.

Interment will be held on December 27, 2006 at the Bangued Catholic Cemetery after the 7:00 a.m. Mass at the Saint James the Elder Cathedral, Bangued, Abra.

We request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

JOSE AVELINO, JR.

(July 20, 1919 - December 17, 2006)

GUIA BALMORI AVELINO

(November 13, 1920 - December 12, 2006)

Their bereaved children, children-in-law, grandchildren & great grandchild:

Enriqueta (†) & Isagani Campo, Jr. (†)

– Isagani III;

Marlene & Renato Valencia

– Jody, Mylene, Leo & Rex;

Jose III;

Eduardo & Cristina Guzman

– Katrina & Bianca Manese;

Esther & Vernon Gamboa

– Maita, Kristine & Kevin;

Armando & Mariella Dabao

– Melissa, Miguel & Mikaela;

Bernadette & Jean Franco Espina

– Isabel, Paolo & Kristina.

Cremation of Jose Avelino: Manila Memorial Park, December 17, 2006.

Inurnment of Jose Avelino: St. James The Great Crypt, Ayala Alabang Village, Muntinlupa City on December 17, 2006.

In Memoriam

Congressman Luis “Chito” P. Bersamin, Jr.

(March 15, 1944 – December 16, 2006)

Lone District of Abra

His bereaved daughters: **ROSARIO, MARY ANNE, MICHELLE DANIELLE**; grandchildren: **JOHN, ADRIAN, BERNICE, CARL, KISH, JOASH, MICA** and **EMMAN**; sons-in-law: **LORETO SEARES, JR.** and **PLACIDO EDUARTE, JR.**; brothers, sister and in-laws; **EUSTAQUIO** and **RUBY, LONGINO (†)** and **CORAZON (†)**, **CA JUSTICE LUCAS** and **AURORA, FERNANDO** and **FEBE, MATILDE** and **LEVINO, LORETO** and **LOURDES**; nephews, nieces and relatives request the pious readers to pray for the repose of his pilgrim soul.

His earthly remains lie in state at the Superior Deluxe, South Wing Building, La Funeraria Paz, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City, Quezon City and will be transferred to the House of Representatives, Batasan Complex, Quezon City on Tuesday, December 19, 2006, where necrological services will be held in his honor. The remains will be returned to La Funeraria Paz on December 19, 2006, where he will lie in state until December 21, 2006, and will be brought to the family residence in Bangued, Abra on December 21, 2006.

Interment is set on December 27, 2006 at the Bangued Catholic Cemetery following the 7:00 o'clock a.m. Mass at the St. James Cathedral in Bangued, Abra.



In Loving Memory

on her First Death Anniversary

ESTELITA “Telly” R. Ocampo

September 09, 1942 – December 19, 2005
College of the Holy Spirit (Ghost)
1961 High School – 1965 College

Her bereaved husband **Rody**, children, **Jay, Mon** and **AC, Weng, Raffy (†)**, **Ina** and **Jat, Mica**, grandchildren, sisters, sisters-in-law, brothers-in-law, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the repose of her soul.

Mass will be held today, 19th day of December 2006, 4:00 p.m. at Manila Memorial Chapel, Parañaque City.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave us His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have Everlasting life.” — John 3:16

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BUSINESS

Seaoil cuts price of ethanol blended gas by P0.50/liter

By Abigail L. Ho

SEAOIL PETROLEUM CORP. slashed the pump price of its ethanol-blended gasoline by 50 centavos a liter effective Dec. 18.

"As a way of celebrating the enactment of the Biofuels Law, Seaoil is reducing the price of Seaoil E10 by 50 centavos per liter. This makes Seaoil E10 not

only the cleanest fuel, but also the cheapest fuel in the land," Seaoil president Glenn Yu said in a statement.

Seaoil, considered the pioneer in selling gasoline blended with 10-percent ethanol directly from its service stations' pumps, started offering the alternative fuel in August last year.

Seaoil now offers E10 in all of

its 106 stations nationwide.

The passage of the Biofuels Act of 2006 also prompted Seaoil to firm up plans to put up its own 100,000 liters-a-day ethanol plant.

In an earlier interview, Yu said the passage of the bill was the only thing that the oil firm was waiting for before drafting a more concrete plan for the establishment of its own ethanol refinery.

With the bill now signed into law, he said the timing was right to set that plan into motion.

This plan was contingent on the passage of the Biofuels Bill into law, which ensures a market for ethanol-blended gasoline.

Under the Biofuels Act of 2006,

all gasoline products should have at least a 5-percent ethanol blend within two years of the effectivity of the law. All diesel-fed vehicles, on the other hand, should use a minimum 1-percent biodiesel blend within three months of the law's effectivity.

The mandated blend will rise to 2 percent for biodiesel after two years, and to at least 10 percent for bio-ethanol after four years.

Apart from the ready market for biofuels that the law creates, the Biofuels Act of 2006 also provides incentives for the production, distribution and use of locally produced biofuels.

FirstGen to expand Pantabangan-Masiway generation capacity

LOPEZ-OWNED FIRST GEN Hydro Power Corp. is planning to expand the capacity of the 112-megawatt Pantabangan-Masiway hydropower complex by 109 MW.

Peter Garrucho, vice chair and chief executive of parent firm First Gen Corp., said the first 15-MW upgrade of the facility's existing units should come on stream by mid-2008, while the next 16-MW upgrade should be done by mid-2009.

These would cost the company between \$20 million and \$25 million, Garrucho said in an interview with reporters yesterday.

If things go well with the upgrade, he said the company would undertake an \$80-million expansion project that would add another 65-MW unit to the Pantabangan plant and another 13-MW unit to the Masiway facility.

He said these new units should

come on stream by mid-2010.

"The Pantabangan-Masiway hydroelectric complex could be expanded provided there is enough water. Right now, water levels are relatively high and could even increase, especially as Casacnan is planning to increase the throughput of water to the Pantabangan dam," he said.

He said the company had raised sufficient funds, via a bond issue that generated \$90 million and First Gen's initial public offering earlier this year, for the expansion.

"In addition, there are internally generated funds that every year add to our coffers," he said.

First Gen acquired the Pantabangan-Masiway plant package from the government through a bidding for \$129 million. Its bid bested that of sole competitor SN Aboitiz Power Inc., which offered \$112 million.

Abigail L. Ho

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NTC starts study
on number portability

By Riza T. Olchondra

THE NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS Commission has created a team to study how cellular phone subscribers can switch networks without having to change their numbers.

This means a subscriber of Smart, Globe, Talk n' Text, Touch Mobile or Sun Cellular will no longer have to buy a new SIM card from his new carrier.

According to an NTC memorandum order, the technical working group was created on Nov. 27 "pursuant to the Public Telecommunications Policy Act of 1995 (R.A. No. 7925)."

Such a measure would be a boon to the 40 million cellular phone subscribers in the Philippines.

"Whichever telco offers the best services to customers will benefit from the change," NTC

common carriers authorization department director Edgardo Cabarios said in an interview.

Cabarios heads the five-member technical working group (TWG) in charge of the number portability study.

The team also includes an engineer from the NTC and one representative each from the Philippine Electronics and Telecommunications Federation (Petef), Philippine Association of Private Telephone Companies and Philippine Chamber of Telecommunications Operators Inc.

Cabarios said the study might take two to three months. The TWG will submit its recommendations to the NTC commissioners, now led by Abraham Abesamis. The NTC, in turn, will hold public consultations before finalizing its rules on the number portability process.

Meralco capital hike,
cash dividend OKd

THE BOARD OF LOPEZ-LED Manila Electric Co. has approved an increase in the company's authorized capital stock to P17.8 billion from the current P13.8 billion.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday, Meralco vice president and assistant corporate secretary Gil San Diego said the board likewise approved the declaration of a P1-per-share cash dividend to common stockholders as of Jan. 10, 2007.

The dividend pay-out would take place on Feb. 5, 2007, he said.

He added that the board would also present to stockholders for approval a stock dividend equivalent

to 10 percent of the company's outstanding common capital stock.

"Both the increase in authorized capital stock and stock dividend will be subject to the ratification/approval by the stockholders and the Securities and Exchange Commission. The record date for the stock dividend will be fixed after the necessary approvals have been obtained," the disclosure stated.

Meralco recently issued P12 billion worth of fixed-rate and floating-rate corporate notes, the proceeds from which would be used to refinance its existing secured loan obligations and fund its working capital requirements. Abigail L. Ho.

IN THIS ISSUE

■ **The problem with sugar** /D1

LIFESTYLE

sms feedback: inquirer

page to 2207 (Globe) and 386 (Smart) or email us at lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

IN THIS ISSUE

■ **Characters you meet in the gym** /D4

MONDAY ARTS & BOOKS • TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY 2BU • THURSDAY FOOD • FRIDAY FASHION & BEAUTY

When breathing is fun, the living is easy

By Lynett A. Villariba
Photos by Rodel Rotoni

ALL IT TAKES TO PULL US OUT OF A HARRIED DAY in the newsroom is an invitation. So when the invitation called for us "to experience the Art of Living (AOL)" in six days, it was enough reason to drop everything.

There were 40 other kindred spirits in the Makati Shangri-La hotel venue who thought it was worth spending some 20 hours in the course.

Like Inner Mind lecturer Jaime Li-cauco who did not know what to expect, my knowledge of AOL was limited to the coincidence that its founder, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, was a namesake of the renowned Indian sitar player.

Some, like Nellie—a comely lady who does not look the septuagenarian that she is—expected to get something new out of a well-lived life. Others, much younger, were expecting to have the same life-changing experience their friends gushed about.

Putting a smile

Like innocent children on their first day of school, we sat on the white sheet-covered carpet to be enlightened on universal Vedic wisdom by a non-Indian lady garbed in an Indian tunic with a nametag that read "Ruth."

She assured skeptics that: "The organization is not important, it is the individual that is. Our aim is to put a smile in every heart."

Adapted to the needs of modern life by its 50-year-old founder based in Bangalore, India, AOL courses are offered worldwide as an experiential program designed to develop the full potential of life. It is anchored on the premise that it is in our nature to be happy, truthful and at peace.

Each one will have to work that one out for himself/herself. As the AOL founder says: "There is no proxy walking [on the path]."

Best chance

True to the eastern tradition, when a student is ready, a teacher comes to impart what instructional manuals cannot do. The teacher recommended things to undo as the best chance of achieving "what you

AOL volunteer Katherine Tan goes through a yoga

stretching exercise to prime the body for rhythmic breathing.

came here for."

At first, Miguel, in his 20s, balked at no caffeine, no smoking and going vegetarian for six days. But his passion for learning outweighed his desire for mundane pleasures.

What was harder for some people, because of the nature of their work, was to avoid news, violence and television.

Easy and relaxing

When Tita told her family she would be coming home late for the next five days because of her evening class, they could not understand why the busy Quezon City judge had to travel to Makati "just to learn how to breathe."

As days passed, what made the course easy and relaxing were exercises to put the body in a relaxed

mood. The series of breathing exercises freed the body and mind of negative emotions and toxic tensions that caused mental constipation. Once the mind was free and relaxed, the body followed.

On day three, Miguel found out he could easily glide into the relaxation state with a body made light by a vegetarian diet without caffeine and nicotine. He also noticed a heightened visual sense, making colors brighter.

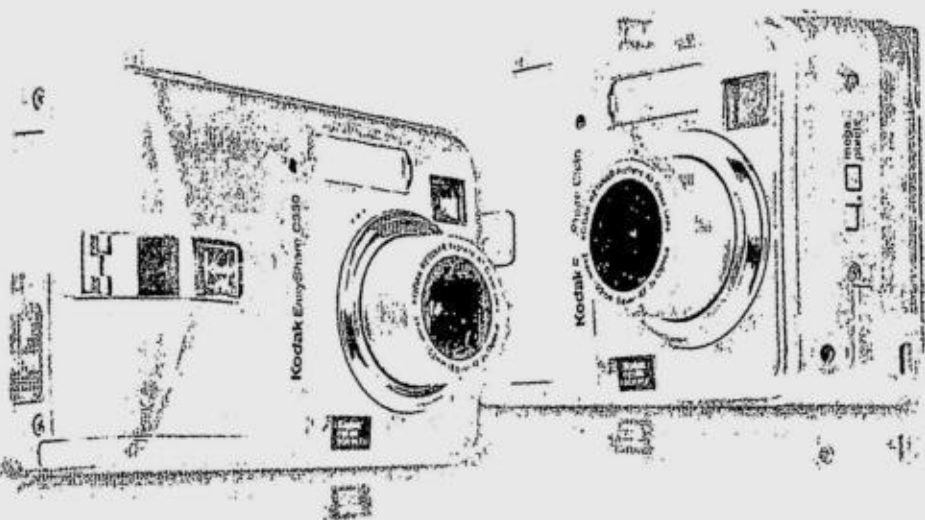
By day four, Helen, an insomniac, was surprised to have been able to sleep without pills for the first time.

WHEN/C3

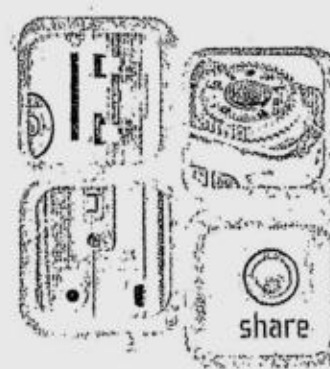
FIRST of three *ujjayi* breathing postures begins with hands on hips, taking in eight cycles of 4-4-6-2 inhale-hold-exhale-hold rhythmic breathing to fill up the lower part of the lungs.



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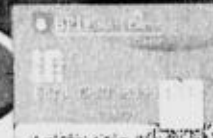
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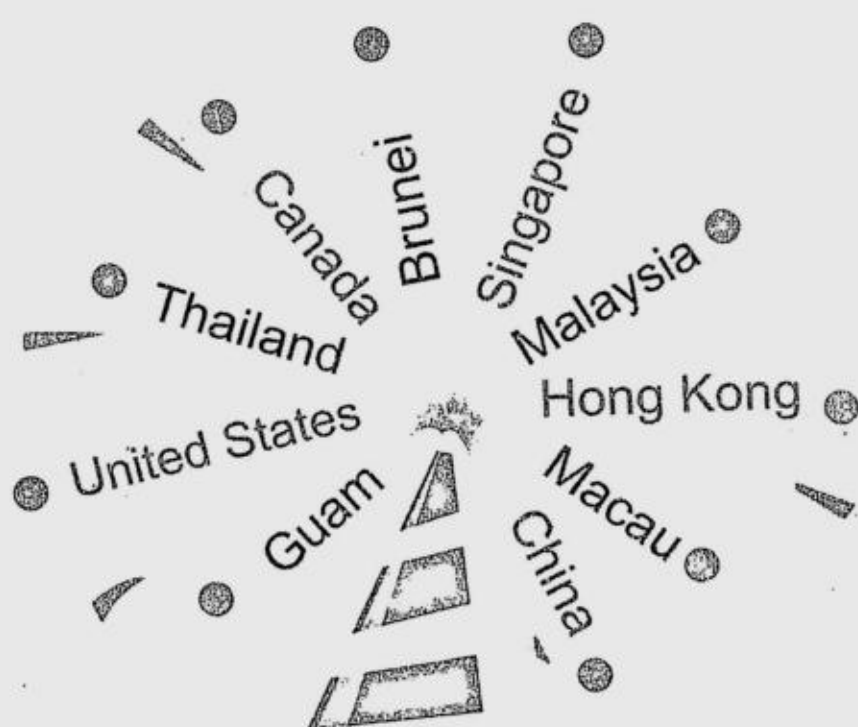


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NATORI'S Ian Geron, Susan Joven, Ching Cruz, Mons Tantoco and Arnel Papa



MALOU Fernandez, Marissa Concepcion, Maricris Alvarez, and Crickette Tantoco



TRISHA Briones, ageless Helen Ong and Evie Costa, and Mia Tambunting-Padilla



CESAR Gaupo with Agnes Huibonhua, Fe Rodriguez and Criselda Lontok



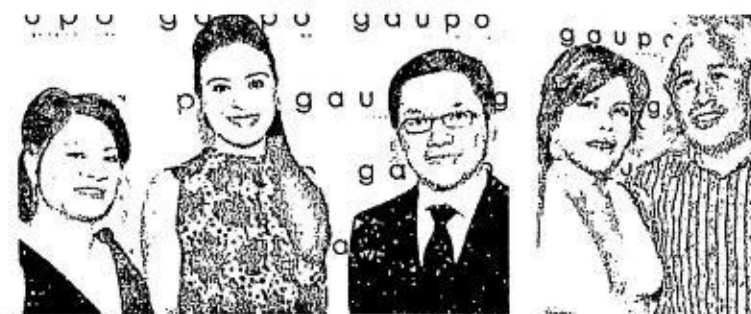
TESSA Valdes with David and Jessica Bunevacz



LEICA and Amanda Carpo, Marilu Batchelor and Annette Coronel



MARITONI Fernandez, Driter Sarmiento and Noel dela Merced



GAUPO Shoes president Emelda Teng and marketing director Eric Teng with Dawn Zulueta

SEXY Doody Tuson and Raul Manzano

Gaupo's sole-baring show



TOP model Rissa Mananquil Samson



ANGEL Aquino



PINKY Amador attended Marie Claire's first anniversary party.

LEAVE IT TO CREATIVE GENIUS CESAR Gaupo, *palanggas*, to organize a super stylish presentation like the unveiling of his wow Gaupo Shoe Couture collection.

Cosmo-Manille's beautiful people and fashionable women gathered at The Peninsula Manila Conservatory for the fab show.

Against simple black drapes, human mannequins in glamorous outfits donned Gaupo's masterful creations, dahlings—stunning shoes from the designer's holiday collection that were sensual and so sophisticated.

Gaupo Shoes' cyber smart marketing director Eric Teng hosted the affair, together with the jubilant Gaupo. Elegant women—all of whom contributed to Gaupo's intimate understanding of women—were *tres visible*, *palanggas*.

There were Peninsula Manille's well-loved general manager, David Batchelor; adorable and attractive Marilu Toda; designers Mike de la Rosa, Tonichi Nocom, Dennis Lustico, Arnel Papa and Rick Yupangco with chic Juana Manahan; Paolo Abrera with wife, television personality Suzy Entrata; stylish sisters two Leica and Amanda Carpo; style tandem Cris Albert and Anna Bitong of Fila, natch! Plus so many others too fashionable to mention, dahlings.

Gaupo has definitely moved into world-class shoe couture, with styles that are gorgeously custom-fit for each woman. The 2007 Gaupo Shoes Holiday collection is available at the showroom at the basement of The Peninsula Manila. For info and custom fitting, call brand manager Terry Falcon at 8872888 loc. 345.

Women power

For the past year, Marie Claire magazine has been celebrating the modern Filipino woman: stylish, independent and open-minded; someone who knows what she wants.

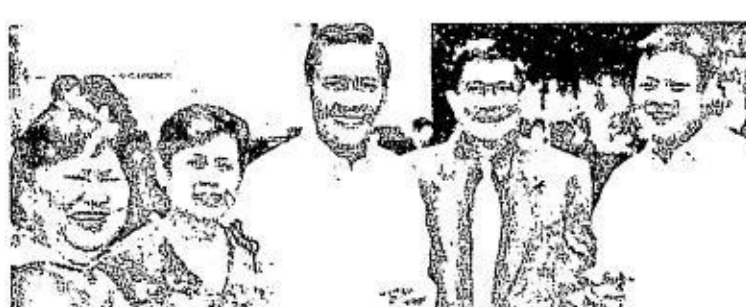
To celebrate its first anniversary, the magazine chose 10 amazing women who not only inspired others by excelling in their fields, but also embodied substance and style.

Marie Claire's Women of the World were honored in an anniversary party at the Ayala Museum, Greenbelt 4.

Emcee and Marie Claire editor in chief Myrza Sison presented the award to the 10 women.

Angel Aquino, 33, model and multi-awarded actress has been in show business for 10 years.

Luchi Cruz-Valdes, 45, is a broadcast journalist who has been in the business for over



DRUGSTORE Association of the Philippines chair Celia Carlos and president Erlinda Pascual; Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan; Philippine Chamber of Pharmaceutical Industry's Willy Fabros, and Michael de la Cruz

20 years.

Lizzie Zobel, 41, is a children's-literacy and family-planning advocate through Friendly Care and Sa Aklar Sisikat Foundations.

Laura Verallo de Bertotto, 34, entrepreneur, is chief executive officer of VMV Hypoallergenic, the first Filipino hypoallergenic "cosmeceutical" company.

Gaby de la Merced, 24, is one of only two women drivers competing in the Asian Formula 3 series.

Jo Ann Bitagcol, 26, is a photographer/model.

Yolly Villanueva-Ong, 55, is an advertising executive.

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by Alex Van Hagen using Kodak EasyShare system



Ma. Elena Bautista, 37, is former head of the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board.

Anna Leah Sarabia, 52, is executive director of the Women's Media Circle and president of the Kalakasan Foundation for women against violence.

Nora Daza, 78, culinary expert, was host of the television show "Cooking It Up with Nora."

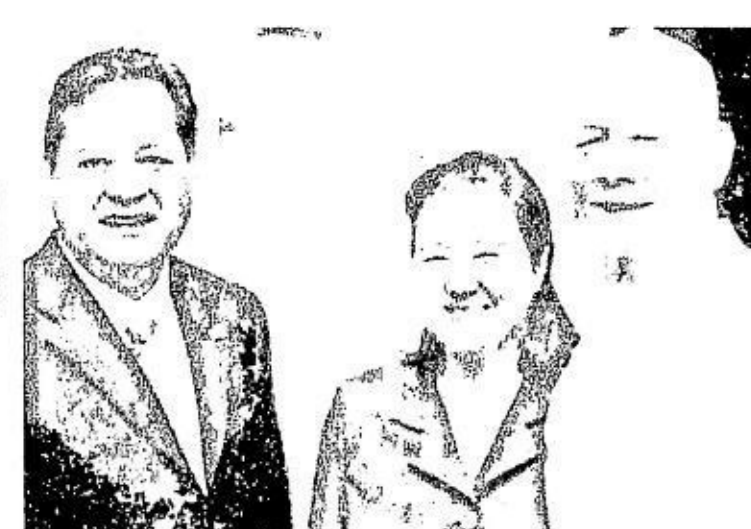
Designer Kate Torralba provided the entertainment for the party, which was sponsored by Pond's Double White and Moët Hennessy.

"Marie Claire magazine is the only magazine that actively challenges its readers to become more beautiful, smarter and more real," explained Myrza S., but who else, *di bala, palanggas*?

Gorgeous Southern beauty Lucy Torres-Gomez graced the cover of the November Marie Claire issue.

60 years

These days, *palanggas*, we are seeing more and more of Filipino power and passion through our compatriots' outstanding international achievements. The 60th anniversary of Filipino-owned pharmaceutical com-



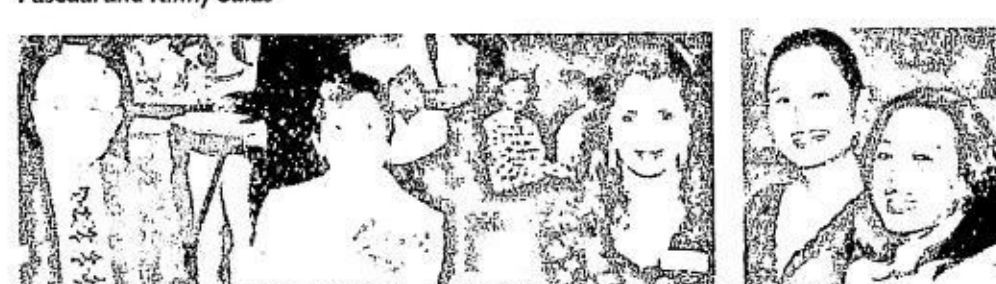
CHAIR of Pascualab Dr. Abraham Pascual with the owners of Mercury Drug Corp., Vivian Que-Azcona and Mariano Que



PASCUALLAB'S Manuel Salazar, Mercury Drug's Jacinto Concepcion, Pascualab's Remy Rivera; BFAD director Leticia Gutierrez; Dr. Abraham Pascual; and Body Needs and Basics GM Red Espiritu



THE BEAUTIFUL pack: Sylvia Pascual, Bambee and Jay Tambunting, Pinky Aragon, Maui Pascual and Kinny Salas



DR. JOSÉ Reyes, Dr. Alfereta Tan Reyes and beauty queen Evangeline Pascual



LIA Andanar-Yu and Rosan Cruz

pany Pascual Laboratories Inc. (Pascualab), dahlings, was another reason for the nation to be proud.

The milestone was celebrated at a fab grand event in the Rizal Ballroom of the Makati Shangri-La where *moi*, along with Pascualab's industry partners, suppliers and other invitees, joined in recognizing the magnitude of the company's accomplish-

ment that has made it a national gem.

The entire Pascual clan was present and accounted for, *palanggas*, including hot celebrity members Lynn Ching-Pascual and Evangeline Pascual.

At the lavishly decorated ballroom, the awesome voices of the Ambassadors of Light had us mesmerized as we enjoyed our superbly prepared dinner. A unique multimedia show followed and a *très* special audio-visual presentation that underscored Pascualab's commitment to its mission over an impressive span of six decades. It ended with the unveiling of the company's special 60th logo.

What a delight it was to hear Pascualab chair Dr. Abraham Pascual share personal stories about his parents, stressing their "dedication and faith in building a company whose main objective is to provide quality medicines that are affordable to every Filipino." Tons of VIPs, like Bureau of Food and Drugs director Leticia Barbara Gutierrez, who gave the keynote speech, recognized Pascualab's invaluable contributions to the nation.

The event was hosted by TV personalities Marc Nelson and Lia Andanar. It featured performances by no less than world-class Filipino artists Robert Seña and Isay Alvarez, who sang, as always, with tremendous heart and energy, *palanggas*.



MARIE Claire's 10 Women of the World



LUCY Torres-Gomez with Kate Torralba

Molested by a spirit

MABEL (NOT HER REAL NAME), A woman in her 20s, has been sexually molested by an unseen spirit for a couple of years now. It started when she was in fourth-year high school.

She recalled the first time it happened. "It was Sunday, around 10 or 11 a.m. I was sleeping in my room when, all of a sudden, something heavy was on top of me. I could not talk, move my body or open my eyes. I could feel his whole body on top of me and I heard him whisper in my ear, 'Mahal kita.' I could feel his breath on my face!

"After a few seconds, I rushed to my mom and told her what happened. She called my aunt who did a ritual called *tawas*. Afterward, my aunt called and told my mom that someone was performing an *orasyon* on me.

"The second time it happened was Dec. 25 last year. We just finished eating *Noche Buena* and everyone decided to take a rest. My sister's cell phone started to ring at around 5:30 a.m. Then I felt someone was watching me.

"In fact, I sensed that one of them ran

to stop my sister's phone from ringing. I really felt their presence. One was beside my bed, the other was standing in front of me and the third was on top of me.

"I got really scared! I grabbed my blanket to cover my body and closed my eyes. Afterward, I went to my parents' room crying but they were asleep. I went back to my bed and slept with the blanket covering my whole body. I was scared stiff!

"Later I told one of our maids what happened to me. She asked if I wanted her to talk to her father about this. We called her father and after telling him the story, he said, 'Gusto ka nilang kunin.' I was shocked! This time it was no longer a living person performing an *orasyon* on me but something else.

"Last week, at around 1:30 a.m., I couldn't sleep. I could again feel someone watching me. When I was finally drifting off to sleep, I felt someone on top of me. I couldn't move my body nor scream. This happened three or four times. And it only happened when I was sleeping or about to go to sleep.

"I've only related here the important

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime T. Licaucio

things, but I've experienced a lot more. I really need help!"

Details needed

Yes, you need immediate help. Please call my office at 8926806 or 8107245; or 0906-3561799. There are several details I want to get from you so I can figure out the best strategy to handle your case.

There are earthbound spirits who took a liking for you and several are sexually molesting you, not just one! Such an entity is called an incubus (plural is incubi). They are malevolent and sexually starved spirits preying usually on innocent young maidens like you.

During the Medieval Era, there were many reported cases of incubi molestations of women. Even Catholic nuns living in convents were victimized by these creatures. Exorcisms had to be performed on them.

Ordinary blessings by priests will not get rid of incubi. You will need somebody trained for this purpose. There are exorcist priests. These are those with the power and authority to fight these evil spirits.

Lay people who are clairvoyant and who have undergone training in spiritual battles can also help victims of sexual molestations by spirits.

Demonic

It is not true that somebody alive was performing an *orasyon* on you. An incubus is not a living person. It is a demonic spirit.

Although it is no guarantee, you should avoid sleeping alone and always have the lights on when you sleep.

You should also wear a protective object in your body, like the St. Benedict's medal that's been empowered or blessed in the proper ritual by a Benedictine priest authorized to do so. Otherwise, it has no power to protect you from demonic possession or molestation.

Another thing you can do pending exorcism of these demons is to learn more

about the spirit world so you can protect yourself from negative spirits. For starters, read my books or attend my seminars so you will learn how to deal with your psychic gifts.

You are a sensitive and open channel. That's why such earthbound spirits can affect you. They do this while you are asleep or about to sleep because that's the time when your brain waves go down to the Theta and Delta levels where they can reach you.

At the Beta level or the waking state of your brain, spirits cannot touch you because you are on a different wave length. That's why the first line of defense when you sense the presence of spirits is to jump up and down, or clap your hands loudly so that your lower brain waves will return to the faster frequency of the Beta rhythm. This usually works.

Listen to my Sunday radio program 8-9 p.m. on *d2mM*, 630 kHz, AM band. For inquiries about seminars offered by the Inner Mind Development Institute, call 8107245, 8926806 or 0906-3561799

When breathing is fun, the living is easy

From page C1

By day six, we were gazing into one another's eyes, purportedly to relate. Instead, we ended up laughing and giggling at what we saw as mirrors of ourselves.

Affirmation

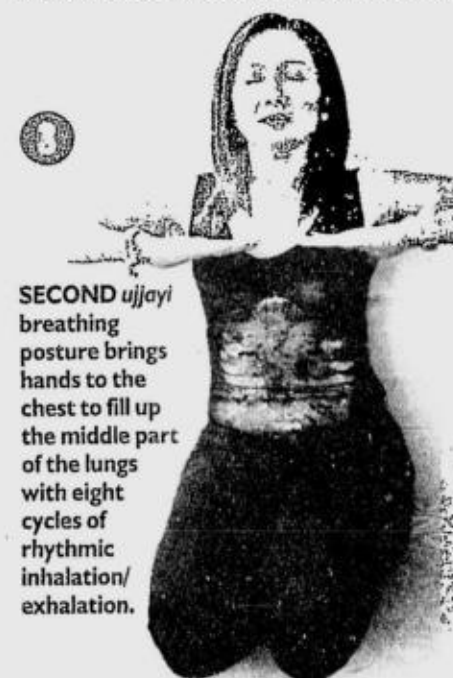
Did the students take to heart the Art of Living's basic premises for achieving a stress-free life at the end of the course?

If only we can affirm that all human beings are capable of living a healthy happy life, free from stress, fears and anxieties. If only we can grasp that it is the birthright of all living beings to live life with energy, full of enthusiasm, meaning and love.

If only, with a cultivated positive attitude borne out of the skills taught during the course, we can summon our will



SMILE of success. The 40 people from different backgrounds look fulfilled at the end of a six-day Art of Living course taught by Hong Kong AOL's Ruth Kuok.



SECOND *ujjayi* breathing posture brings hands to the chest to fill up the middle part of the lungs with eight cycles of rhythmic inhalation/exhalation.

and choose to live and find purpose in life, then we would have lived the Art of Living.

Transformation

Seven years ago, Ruth Kuok was content with her life in Hong Kong until she noticed a remarkable transformation in her friend who took the Art of Living course.

"For two years, this friend bugged me to do the course. If only to make her stop, I took it."

Ruth says the six-day course was not a dramatic transformation for her but: "as I went into more and more practice, I began to attain a sense of wellbeing I have never experienced before."

She changed from being a person who kept to herself to someone who taught others.



FINAL *ujjayi* breathing posture with hands on upper back fills up the upper part of the lungs with six cycles of rhythmic inhalation/exhalation.

"When my two teenagers who were in that difficult stage began enjoying having me, I knew that the course opened up a whole new dimension for me. My family was the primary beneficiary."

Voluntary service

Ruth and others in the foundation are volunteers who render service for free. Enrollment proceeds are used by the local chapter for various humanitarian projects.

Something in the practice of breathing and meditation inspires humanitarian service. "Responsibility is joyful and empowering," volunteers Nameeta Dargani and Katherine Tan said. During the course, they were organizing disaster relief for Bicol.

The foundation estimates that six million people across the globe have taken the Art of Living course.

Today, the Art of Living Foundation is the largest volunteer network offering inspirational programs in 144 countries to people of varied backgrounds—from professionals to distressed village children to prisoners. It has a special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

The next Art of Living (Part I) course is 7-10 p.m., Jan. 15-20, Makati Tuscany, Ayala Avenue. Call Nameeta Dargani at 0917 7919190 or Denise Celdran at 0916 3219223.

E-mail the author at lvillariba@inquirer.com.ph



With more energy, mas happy mag-carolling kaya mas happy ang Christmas.

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Gifts of health, beauty and wellness

MEDICard, The Healthcare I Deserve!

What are the common injuries associated with firecrackers?

Filipinos love to light firecrackers on New Year's Eve. Every year, scores are hurt or even maimed in firecracker accidents. The common injuries associated with firecrackers are burns, contusions/lacerations, and poisoning. Fireworks-related injuries commonly involve hand and fingers (26%), eyes (21%), and the head (18%). More than half of the injuries were burns (63%) while contusions/lacerations were the second most frequent injury (18%). Poisoning as a result of eating the candy looking sparkler called "dancing firecrackers" or "watusi" usually involved children. According to Department of Health, two people were killed and 610 others were injured by firecrackers and guns from December 21, 2005 to January 1, 2006 so welcoming the New Year with a loud bang may instead bring a painful experience to those who become careless in handling firecrackers.

Take Charge Doc!



This week's answer to our feature question on the common injuries associated with firecrackers was provided by our Medical Coordinator from V.L. Makabali Memorial Hospital, Dr. Arnold Dino Granda. Doc Dino specializes in General Surgery and has been in practice for seven years. He had his medicine proper at the University of Sto. Tomas and earned his degree in 1988. He later had his residential training for a specialization in General Surgery at the University of the Philippines in 1994. He is affiliated with several medical organizations such as the Philippine Society of General Surgeons, Philippine College of Surgeons, Philippine Medical Association and the Philippine Association of Laparoscopic and Endoscopic Surgeons. He spends his free time reading books or surfing the net. Doc Dino also has a huge collection of vintage watches. MEDICard members may consult him for advice at the V.L. Makabali Memorial Hospital, Rm. 2106, from Monday to Saturday 9am to 5pm.

MEDICard's Medical Director, Dr. Nicky Mantaya answers questions on health through the assistance and expertise of MEDICard's network of accredited specialists. Write to Dr. Nicky or E-mail him at inquiry@medicard.phil.com for your inquiries on health matters.



Nicky

GIFT-GIVING HAS ALWAYS BEEN A challenge to many. It is often more confusing and stressful during the yuletide season.

As you finalize your holiday gift list, think about two things you tend to overlook:

1. Your name at the top of the list and
2. Health as a gift option, if not a priority

Healthy choices

Your food choices should have the health of the receiver in mind. Imagine how touched a person would be to receive a note saying "because I care about your health..." Consider sending the following:

- Organic rice (all varieties from the slopes of Chananaw, Kalinga, from the famous rice terraces)

- Fruits and vegetables of every imaginable color, size and shape, as well as organic chicken, for Christmas baskets. Call Mara Pardo de Tavera at 8109823, 7294082 or 0917-9971059; visit www.organic.ph.

- Virgin coconut oil—Not all VCO is good. If you are familiar with the manufacturer, then buy it. As the only oil that contains lauric acid, VCO tops the list as a health booster when taken internally. Just 1-2 tablespoons a day can improve the quality of your life. It's antiviral/bacterial/microbial properties are incomparable. A must-buy for the health conscious.

Brands to buy: Splash (in flavored varieties like orange, strawberry) or, for those who prefer it plain, Peter Paul, Pro Source (available at SM).

If it's good for you in the inside, it must be good on the outside.

Apply liberally cocozen, 100-percent virgin coco oil, on your face and body—available at Watsons/Rose Pharmacy. Use VCO-enriched soaps like Oil & Herbs with pineapple and papaya.

INSIDE OUT

Cory Quirino

- Vitamins—Most people are not in the habit of taking a multivitamin/mineral supplement. It might be a good time to start. If you are a one-a-day pill popper, consider Pharmaton. Its newest formulation has an excellent combination of deanol as brain-booster and ginseng for energy/immune system building. At Mercury/all drugstores.

- Extra Vitamin C fortification should include sodium ascorbate (Fern-C). It's non-acidic nature will not cause the formation of kidney stones when taken in mega-doses. Vitamin C is considered a star in the firmament of health. Call Bomboy Fabregas at 7239135/7217268.

- Herbal wonder—Red ginseng, harvested in the mountains of Korea, has long been extolled as a health tonic. Its pharmacological activities can help combat cancer, hypertension, hepatitis, diabetes mellitus and stress, among others. Saponins are found highest in red ginseng. Avoid counterfeit products by calling the exclusive distributor, Lizada Korean Ginseng, call center 7367732/0928-5019508.

- Cell food—Optimum health requires optimum health food. Bypassing the long stages of digestion, PXP—made from organic rice strains through a unique process exclusively patented by Enzacta—comes in predigested powder form.

When mixed with warm water and taken as a tea before meals, within 20 minutes its energy-giving properties directly fuel your cells. Testimonials from people with health challenges (like diabetes, low libido, ADD/ADHD, poor complexion) have been impressive. Call Hans Palacios, 0915-3625705.

Wellness wonders

If the wild or the great outdoors beckons you to leave the asphalt jungle behind, there are several sights to visit that will soothe your stresses.

- A nature park like the La Mesa Park and Watershed is just in Metro Manila's outskirts. Have a picnic with the family. Call 5515555.

- Step into a natural rainforest and take in unpolluted clean air to clear your lungs. Places like Hidden Valley Springs (Alaminos, Laguna) near the foothills of Mt. Makiling have to this day remained faithful to Mother Nature. Amid giant *amlang* trees and the sound and feel of mineral pools and natural waterfalls, you will revive your city-dulled senses. Call 8184034 or 8404112.

- If you are city-based and the need for a relaxing break seizes you, enjoy a sunset. At Manila Bay, sunset views are free. Complete your experience of well-being at the newly renovated Sofitel Philippine Plaza whose natural view of the bay is unobstructed and exclusive. Its spa affords lovers/honeymooners a perfect bay-window view of the sea from their private suites. From beauty, massage to detox treatments, the spa is open day and night. Call 4304051.

Gift yourself

Reward yourself this season by doing something good for you and you alone. Renew your lifestyle and keep wellness foremost in your mind. It's never too late to feel good and look good.

Spiritual bonus

Food for the soul can be uplifting and life-giving. Find a charity that needs your time, talent or resources. Think about giving to a shelter like Tuloy Streetchildren Village. Call Fr. Rocky Evangelista at 7750484.

Love and light this yuletide!

Compaq recommends Windows® XP Professional.



Sleek design, peak performance.

HP Compaq Presario V3194TU Notebook PC

Sleek. Sculpted. Powerful. The new HP Compaq Presario V3194TU Notebook PC powered by Intel® Centrino® Duo Mobile Technology with Intel® Core™ 2 Duo Processor delivers impressive multitasking performance wherever you roam. In creating this modern masterpiece, HP invented a state-of-the-art moulding technique to create the industrial brushed gunmetal casing, which offers greater scratch resistance than traditional painted casings. And if you are looking for more innovative design features, try the latchless magnetic closure and touch-sensitive buttons that let you launch and control your digital media without booting up. So, whatever way you look at it, this is a tool that's designed to impress.



Sleek new design

Unique scratch-resistant gunmetal casing helps you make the right impression, while one-touch buttons enrich your computing experience through improved aesthetics and usability.



Latch-free screen

Streamlined and intuitive, like every other aspect of this machine. One simple arm movement is all it takes to lift your screen into position.



Control your media

The backlit capacitive buttons offer one-touch DVD playback. Just touch to mute or slide across the volume pad to adjust sound level.



Expansion base* (optional accessory)

The HP xb3000 notebook expansion base offers height-adjustable, comfortable eye-level viewing, more productivity ports, wireless support and integrated speakers for this notebook.



Sharapova's edge

MARIA SHARAPOVA, RANKED the top woman tennis player this year, continues to improve her game with the help of the Top Prince's O3 racket.

The Top Prince endorser, who favors the O3 white, further im-

proved her play with the racket's expanded sweet spot and increased speed.

The 19-year-old Russian is among a distinguished group of over 75 touring top pro players who use the O3 racket.



MARIA Sharapova

Prince Sports Inc. is a recognized leader in game-improvement technologies and engineering-based high-performance sports equipment. Prince O3 White rackets are available at Toby's Sports outlets, Chris Sports, Royal Sporting House, Olympic Village, JB Sports, Sports House, Sportmart Duty Free, Gaisano Malls, CSI Dept. Stores, Bohol Quality, Lee Super Plaza, Ardeans, Lopes Dept. Stores, Sportscaze, ICM Malls, and other major sporting goods stores nationwide.

Enhance aromatherapy with authentic oils

WITH MANY FILIPINOS learning to enjoy aromatherapy sessions, it is important that they should use only authentic oils that deliver therapeutic benefits.

Spa Essentials' Wellness Oils are 100 percent pure and natural. The oils are specially formulated to cleanse the body and relieve stresses and strains.

Scientific studies have indicated that unadulterated Wellness oils increase metabolism, speed up healing process, relax muscles and the nervous system, enhance removal of metabolic waste, improve circulation of blood and lymph, relieve mental and physical fatigue, reduce pain, tension and anxiety, make muscles and joints more supple, and improve skin tone.

When inhaled, they work on the nervous system and brain by stimulating the nerves used for smelling. When absorbed through the skin, stronger

components of the oils are released into the bloodstream to allow its healing powers to help ease discomfort or sickness.

Spa Essentials offers a wide range of Wellness oils for various health needs. Sleep Easy helps achieve a relaxing sleep. Revitalizing relieves tensions and produces feelings of strength. Stress Relief calms the tired mind and body while Sensual stirs the mood for love and romance. Breathe Easy clears stuffiness and congestion and Aches and Pains warms the skin and helps revive tired or sore muscles. Body Cleansing cleanses the body and helps reduce cellulite, congestion and other toxic skin conditions caused by pollution.

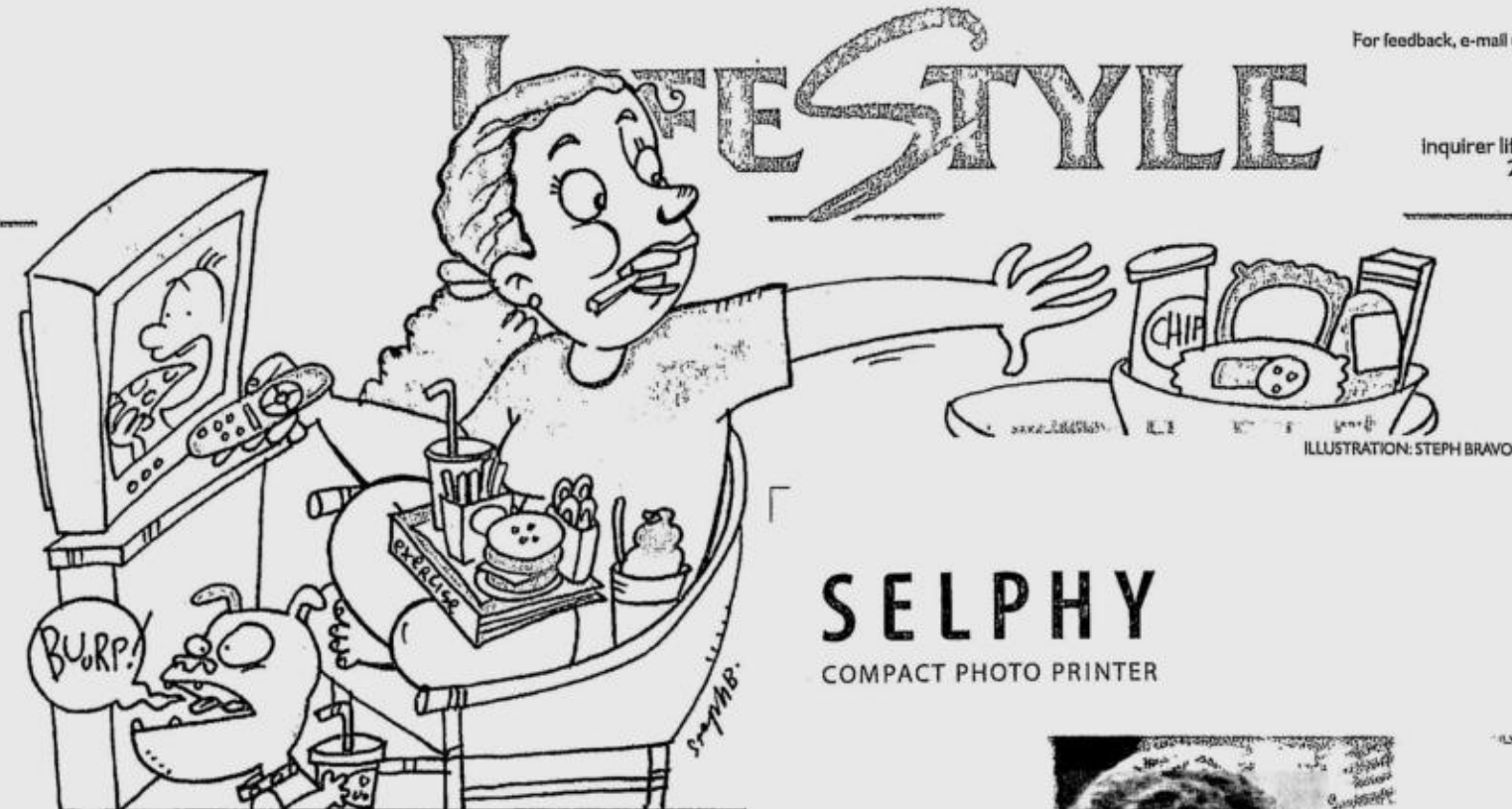
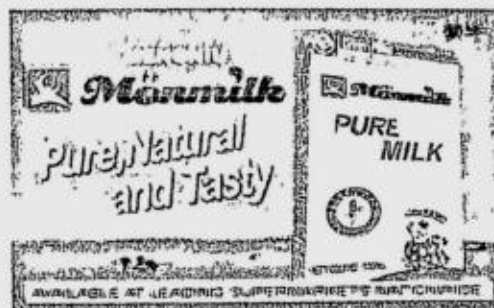
Spa Essentials' Wellness Oils are available in essential oil blend, linen spray and massage oil.

Spa Essentials' Wellness Oils are exclusively available at all Watsons stores.

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The Philippines ranks ninth among countries with the highest projected incidence of diabetes in the world

SELPHY

COMPACT PHOTO PRINTER

Canon
Delighting You Always

Sugar is sweet and that's the problem

By Anne A. Jambora

A PANDEMIC THREATENS Asia in the near future. Worse is the fact that it is a highly preventable, non-communicable disease.

Dubbed as the silent killer, the disease strikes younger and younger people each year.

In a recent report, the World Health Organization (WHO) said 171 million people were diagnosed with diabetes in 2000, with more than 50 percent living in Asia. By year 2030, the WHO estimates the number will reach 366 million, hitting people in their productive years (40 and above).

With 5-8 million cases, the Philippines ranks ninth among countries with the largest projected diabetic populations in the world. Many more remain undiagnosed.

The bleak picture was presented during the recent Global Pandemic Media Workshop sponsored by the drug company GlaxoSmithKline (GSK).

"[Diabetes] is not just about sugar. It's also about obesity, hypertension, cardiovascular disease and so much more," said workshop speaker Dr. Patricia Gatbonton, a diplomat and fellow of the Philippine College of Physicians and Philippine Society of Endocrine and Metabolism.

Worldwide, Type 2 or adult-onset diabetes (when the body does not respond properly to insulin), is more common, more than 90 percent of cases, than Type 1 (also known as insulin-dependent type when the pancreas does not produce enough insulin).

Organ damage

Both types result in increased concentration of glucose (sugar) which damages many of the body's organs.

Every 10 seconds a person dies of diabetes-related causes. Every 30 seconds a limb is lost to the disease. Some 80 percent of diabetics die from cardiovascular disease.

Diabetes is the leading cause of stroke in Asia; worldwide, at least one in 20 deaths is attributed to the disease. Diabetes can take 10 years off a person's lifespan, according to WHO.

Damage, said Gatbonton, begins in the blood vessels and nerves. Complications include eye disease that can cause blindness, kidney failure, nerve damage that increases the risk of amputation, heart disease, stroke and peripheral vascular disease.

"Glucose is the most used form of energy. In Type 2 diabetes, if your body cannot utilize glucose as energy, damage to the cells occurs and the risk of complication arises," Gatbonton said.

She said the many reasons for the alarming rise in diabetes incidence were interrelated. Technological breakthroughs, population growth, aging, urbanization, increasing prevalence of obesity and physical inactivity, for instance, result in a sedentary lifestyle.

Genetically, some people are also at greater risk of developing the disease. But this does not mean people predisposed to diabetes should despair, she said.

Common but preventable

What is Type 2 diabetes, the most common but preventable kind?

The so-called adult-onset diabetes means insulin-resistance, when the body fails to respond effectively to the circulating insulin. Gatbonton said since the body thinks it needs more insulin, the pancreas compensates by pro-

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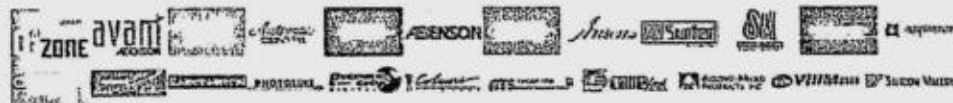
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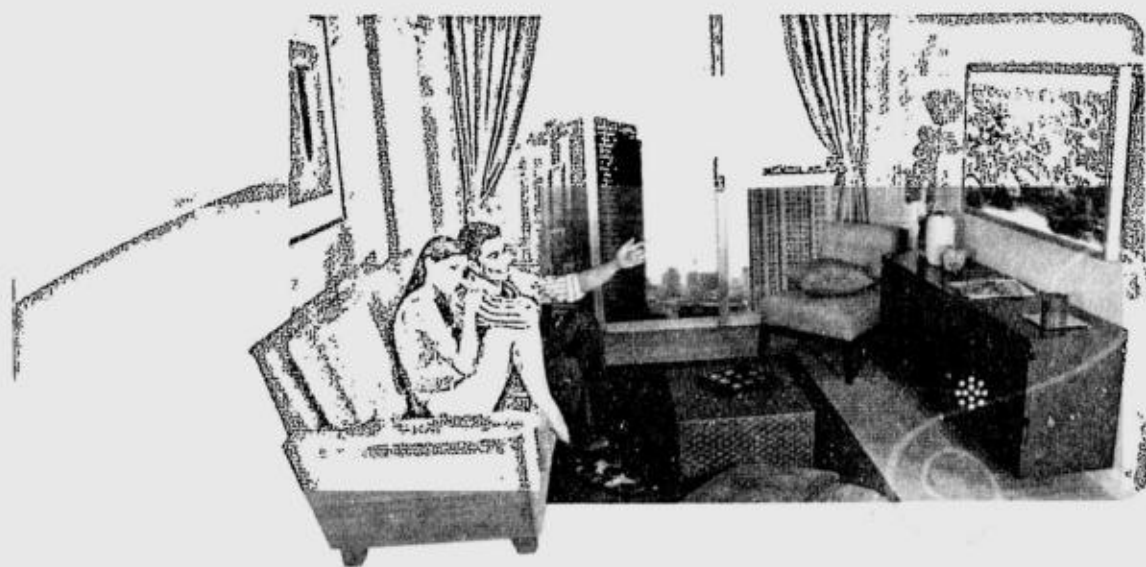
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Per DTI - NCE Permit No. 4659 Series of 2006

FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND



A. LIPIN



BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT



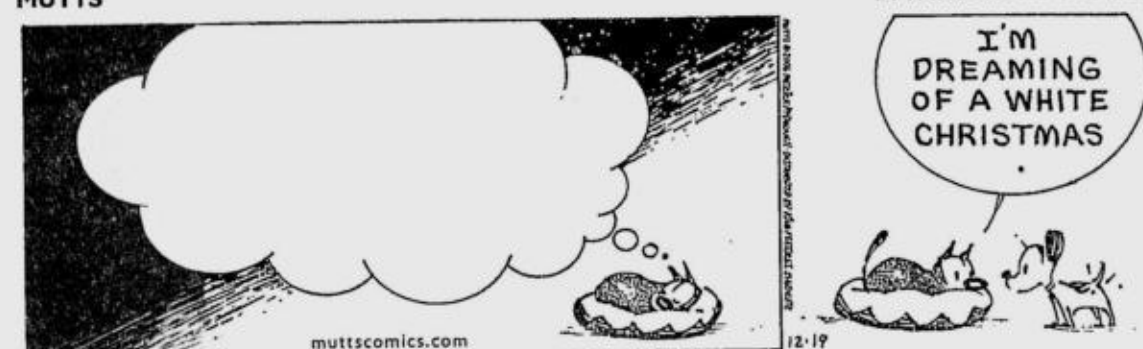
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR



MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL



LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO



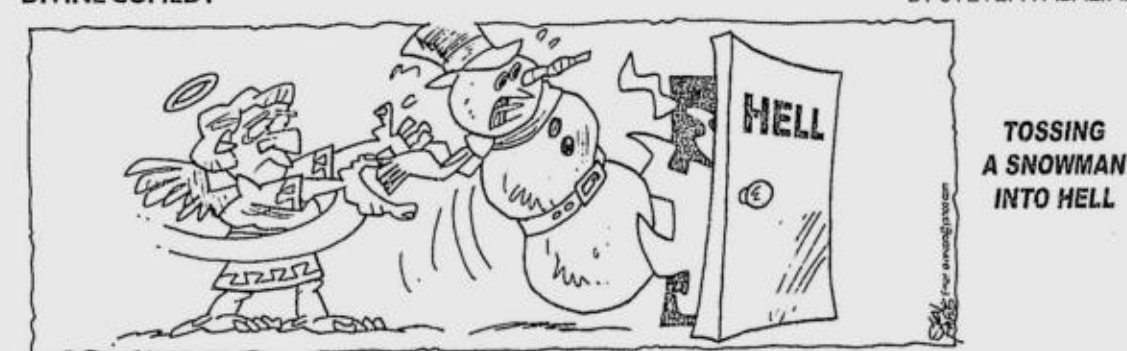
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO



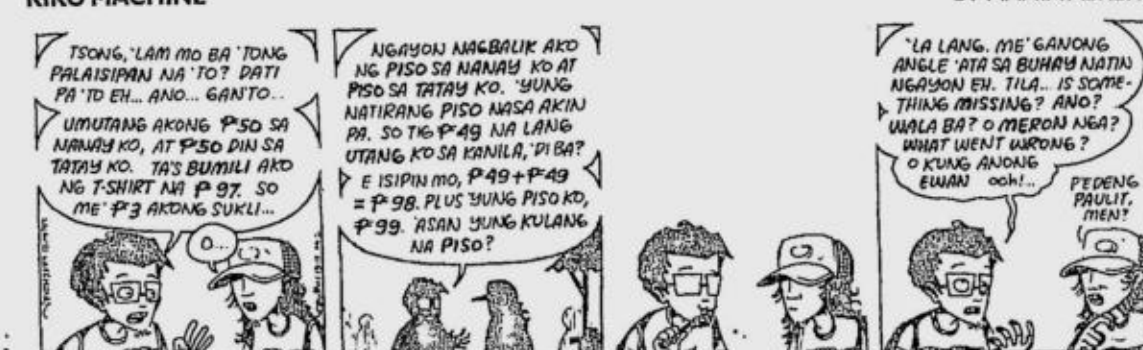
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS



KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA



MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO



TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING



BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON

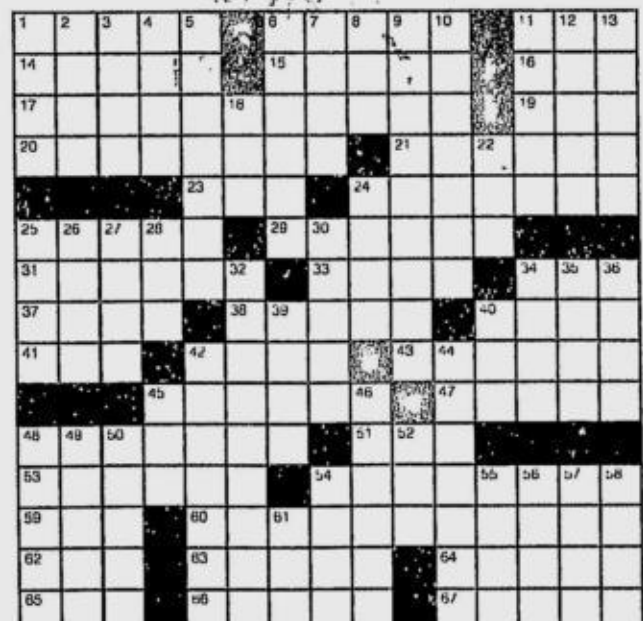


DAILY CROSSWORD

HOROSCOPE

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

- ACROSS**
- 1 Stocking stuffer
 - 6 the Hutt
 - 11 Doesn't lack
 - 14 Declares as true
 - 15 Natural emollients
 - 16 Poem of praise
 - 17 Weight we hate?
 - 19 Stout cousin
 - 20 Climbing plant
 - 21 Tommy Pickles, for one
 - 23 Part of IRA
 - 24 Trucker talker
 - 25 Orzo or ziti
 - 29 "The Devil Wears Prada" star
 - 31 Without end
 - 33 Morays
 - 34 Not turned on
 - 37 Night light
 - 38 Digital dot
 - 40 Center
 - 41 Weight of bricks?
 - 42 Scarlett's plantation
 - 43 Hooray!
 - 45 Sacred space
 - 47 Snoots
 - 48 Chin coverings
 - 51 One-seventh of a rainbow
 - 53 Hounded by creditors, maybe
 - 54 Warm, cheerful brightness
 - 59 Blue
 - 60 Possible remedy for 17A, 9D and 32D
 - 62 Wire measure
 - 63 Give a lecture
 - 64 Gin partner
 - 65 Vein makeup
 - 66 Elaine of "Seinfeld"
 - 67 Catch a whiff of
- DOWN**
- 1 Mineo and Bando
 - 2 Acknowledge openly
 - 3 Actress Campbell
 - 4 Shade source
 - 5 Butt collector
 - 6 Leigh and Jackson
 - 7 "Mephisto Waltz" star
 - 8 Minute of basketball
 - 9 Six-pack abs?
 - 10 Guarantees
 - 11 Save a lot
 - 12 Dwight's political foe
 - 13 Make sure of
 - 18 Luminox
 - 22 Mountain pass
 - 24 Canadian tribe
 - 25 Long ago
 - 26 Choir member
 - 27 Ugly duckling, really
 - 28 Roofing material
 - 30 Dallas dweller
 - 32 Trunk extra?
 - 34 Dagnabbit!
 - 35 Without cost
 - 36 Charges
 - 39 Writer Murdoch
 - 40 Nav. rank
 - 42 McQueen film
 - 44 Charges
 - 45 Sault Marie
 - 46 Rubs out
 - 48 Thingamajig
 - 49 Broadcasting
 - 50 Confuse
 - 52 College URL ending
 - 54 Learning method
 - 55 Small matter
 - 56 Blissful cloud
 - 57 Spiral shape
 - 58 Bus, letter abbr.
 - 61 Bad review



By Paul Guttormsson
Hales Corners, WI

12/19/06

Monday's Puzzle Solved



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YOU BORN TODAY: You have a very brave spirit. You're serious, persevering and powerful. You can overcome tremendous obstacles. You have emotional ups and downs, and invariably, people always have a strong reaction to you. They admire your freedom of spirit. In fact, you inspire people! Work hard to build or construct something this year for rewards in 2008.

Birthdate of: Jake Gyllenhaal, actor; Alyssa Milano, actress; Jennifer Beals, actress.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Mysterious subjects, mesmerizing philosophies and unusual religious ideas fascinate you today. You seem to be tuned in to a higher plane of thinking.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Because you feel sympathetic to the needs of someone, you want to help or be generous if you can. This is an admirable impulse. Nevertheless, don't give away the store.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Conversations with others are sympathetic and yet confusing. You seem to be able to read other people's minds! However, it's almost like too much data is coming in.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): This is a good day to enjoy the company of coworkers. People are mutually sympathetic today. Help someone if you can. (Never miss an opportunity to practice a kindness.)

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Artistic projects are definitely favored today, because you're in touch with your muse. Romance is dreamy. You also feel very caring and tenderhearted toward children.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Strong feelings of sympathy toward a family member are likely today. Perhaps you want to help someone? Quite possibly, others want to help you. People are supportive now.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You might spend time daydreaming or woolgathering today. That's OK. We all need to do this from time to time. Take a mental health day.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Be careful with major financial deals. Your idealism is aroused, but your thinking is not grounded. Quite likely, luxurious purchases will appeal to you now.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Your mind seems to be plugged in to the ether today. (Picking up rock music in your Mercury fillings?) It's as if you can read the thoughts of others. Ironically, this is confusing, not clarifying.

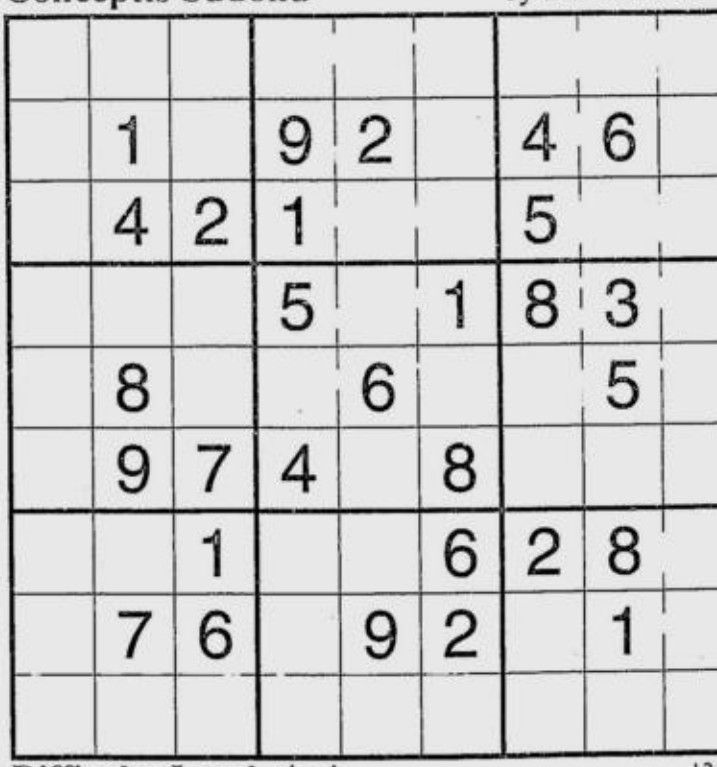
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Solitude in beautiful surroundings will please you today. You need some rest and relaxation. It's also a pleasant day to daydream and think about possible future avenues.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You feel very sympathetic and concerned about a friend today. You want to do whatever you can to help. Similarly, others are sympathetic to you.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Today you're fantasizing about what you would like your life to be like in the future. This is good. Dreams are maps to ponder. It's OK to start with the ideal and slowly adjust to the limitations of reality.

Conceptis Sudoku

by Dave Green



Difficulty Level ★★

12/19

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

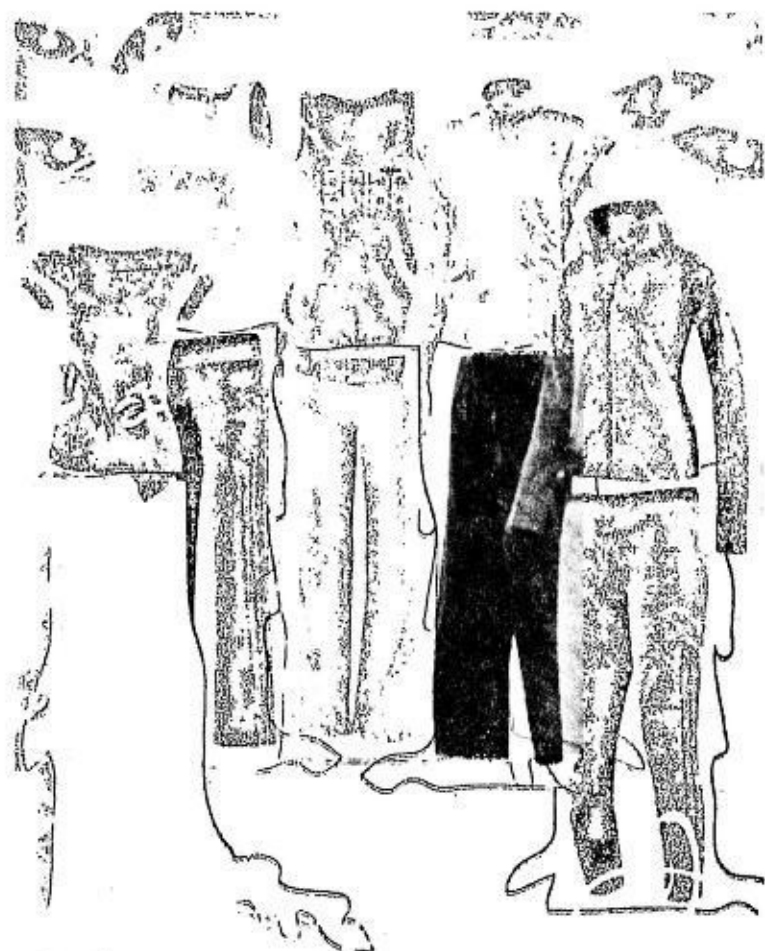
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle



Difficulty Level ★

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PERFORM with the Adidas Adilbri and Fuse lines.

ADIDAS, A LEADING SPORTING brand, makes it easy to get a Christmas gift for everyone with its complete line of apparel.

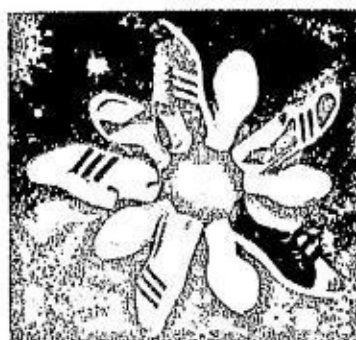
The Adidas Sport Performance and Adidas Originals lines are likely to have something for everyone.

For the sporty, Adidas offers a complete line of high-quality sports performance products with a variety of high-end technologies such as ClimaLite, ClimaCool and ClimaWarm for heat and moisture management and ForMotion for enhanced power of movement and performance.

Among the sought-after pieces is the footwear and apparel collection of American National Basketball Association superstar Tracy "T-Mac" McGrady and Gilbert Arenas.

For the sporty woman, the Adidas Adilbri and Fuse line fuses performance and design seamlessly. It covers five different sports categories including gym, running, yoga, tennis and swimming.

The Adidas Stella McCartney line brings sports performance wear to a new level by providing chic sportswear.



STEP into fun with the Originals Sleek Series.

The Originals line which is also for the fashionable represents the vision and passion of Adidas founder Adi Dassler. The line combines sport authenticity with street style and edge. The Originals apparel and footwear are youthful, hip and functional.

It includes the new City Pack series track jackets and shoes which feature different major cities in the world like New York, London and Paris.

The Adidas sport performance is available at all leading malls nationwide. The Adidas Originals line is available at Adidas Originals concept satellite store at 3/L, Shangri-La Plaza Shopping and G/F, Robinson's Place Manila.

HERE'S what Marrionaud at the SM Mall of Asia has in store for Christmas, among other exclusive beauty and fitness treats: Day After Detox Kit, which includes Guerlain Late Night Recovery Skincare Treatment, Valmont Spirit of Purity Cleansing Water and Origins Peace of Mind, P7,950.



PURE Bliss Package made up of Molton Brown Sauna Visage Face Steaming Tablet, Quiriness Radiant Buffing Mask and Decleor Aroma Spa Tonic, P3,680. Shoppers can get as much as 20-percent discount when they buy these products as a set.

Sugar is sweet and that's the problem

From page D1

ducing more of the protein hormone to keep the blood glucose under control. Eventually, it becomes exhausted and no longer functions properly.

Type 2 diseases are a chronic, progressive and deadly disease. In the past, it usually appeared in adults older than 35 years old. But because of obesity and environmental factors, the disorder is now increasingly seen in children and young adults.

Although blood glucose control is the key to diabetic management, late diagnosis, when blood glucose levels are already out of control, is a major reason for the sharp increase in disease incidence.

Late diagnosis happens since the symptoms, like frequent urination, constant thirst or lack of energy, are not obvious or dramatic.

Blurred vision, a classic symptom of Type 2 diabetes, is seen very late in the disease. Only a fraction of diabetics actually achieve blood glucose control.

Dietary changes among Asians contribute to the growing problem. People are increasingly eating less healthful foods, especially with the Westernization of many people's diet that involves a lot of junk food.

Gatbonton stressed the need for a balanced diet and exercise in preventing diabetes. She added that the diabetic diet is actually a healthy choice for everyone.

She said many physicians control blood glucose levels in people with Type 2 diabetes with the "stepwise approach": lifestyle modifications and treatment with oral anti-diabetic medication. Sometimes a combination of drugs is

necessary.

The problem with this approach, she said, was it took too long before the target reduction in a certain type of hemoglobin, HbA1c, of 6.5 percent or below was achieved. (Red cells in the blood stream are made up of the chemical hemoglobin. Glucose sticks to the hemoglobin, making a glycosylated hemoglobin called hemoglobin A1c or HbA1c. More HbA1c indicates more glucose in the blood.)

Gold standard

The HbA1c test is now the gold standard in diabetes management. Red cells live for 8-12 weeks before they are replaced. Measuring the HbA1c gives the blood glucose average in the body for the past 8-12 weeks.

The daily blood glucose test that many diabetics do only gives a "snapshot" of glucose levels for a particular day.

"Unlike daily blood glucose test, such as fasting plasma glucose, you cannot 'cheat' with the HbA1c test," Gatbonton said.

A combination of diet, exercise and therapy could help achieve the HbA1c target, she said. The expert stressed the need for a combination therapy since most drugs treated just one aspect of the disease. She said evidence suggested combination therapy was better at maintaining blood glucose levels.

There are five main classes of drugs for treating Type 2 diabetes: Thiazolidinediones (rosiglitazone) improves the body's response to insulin action and decreases HbA1c, among others;

biguanides (metformin) "shuts off" the liver to prevent excess glucose production; sulphonylureas (glimepiride) stimulates more insulin production and lowers HbA1c.

In a recent study by Adopt (A Diabetes Outcome Progression Trial), rosiglitazone reduced risk in Type 2 diabetes by 32 percent compared to metformin, and 63 percent compared to glyburide.

Gatbonton advised patients to ask their doctors for the best treatment. As for the rest: "If your blood glucose is on the borderline, please don't wait for it to spiral out of control. Diabetes is a serious medical condition. You wouldn't want it," she said.

E-mail the author at ajambora@inquirer.com.ph



EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Side leg lift

STRENGTHENS AND TONES THE HIPS AND BUTTOCKS

Equipment:

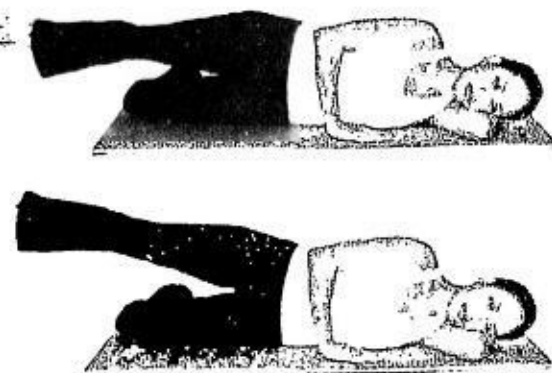
Exercise mat and ankle weights (optional)

Exercise technique:

1. Use your bottom arm as a pillow and place your top hand in front of you for balance.
2. The bottom leg should be bent for a good base of support.
3. Raise your top leg in line with your hip. This is your starting and ending position.
4. Raise your leg as high as you can without turning the toes toward the ceiling. Keep the toes and knees facing forward.
5. Finish the required number of repetitions. Switch sides.

Performance tips:

1. Keep the hip muscle always facing the ceiling. If you roll your leg forward, you'll use your hamstrings and buttocks. If you roll your leg backward, your quadriceps



- (muscles in the front of the thigh) will take over.
2. Keep your head and spine in a straight line.
 3. Start the movement by contracting your hip muscle instead of lifting from your ankle.
 4. Stay in control of your leg. It is just as important to control the downward phase of the movement as the upward phase.
 5. If you have chronic hip joint pain, avoid this exercise.

Repetitions:

Do 10-15 repetitions.

WELL AND GOOD
Tina Juan

**Close encounters
of the gym kind**

Part one

IT'S BEEN A FEW YEARS SINCE I managed a gym but I still remember many incidents that make me chuckle or shake my head in amazement.

For the most part, our clients were average people who wanted to get fit under our supervision. But there were a few who were, shall we say, extraordinary. Some were eccentric, some hardheaded, some truly for-the-books and some just victims of unusual circumstances.

Cell phones

When the first ultra-small cell phones came out on the market, one of our clients flushed her brand-new day-old phone down the toilet.

She placed the phone on her lap while doing her thing, absent-mindedly reached behind to flush, stood up and watched in horror as the phone disappeared.

We felt bad for her and it wasn't much fun for us either because we had to remove the entire bowl. The phone was totally ruined and the poor client had to face her irate mother who had just given it to her for her birthday.

Another client would text while doing step aerobics. Incredibly foolish but true. Despite repeated admonitions from the teacher, she persisted. Well, one day she fell off her bench.

Luckily, she didn't get hurt. After the initial shock, the teacher quietly snickered and prayed that she had finally learned her lesson. She did.

Super saleswoman

If you ever need a champion salesperson, I know just who to recommend. We had this client who was a born saleswoman.

Though it was forbidden to sell things in the gym, she just couldn't help herself. Selling was in her blood. We would find boxes of detergent tucked away in corners of the locker room. We got complaints from clients who felt trapped having to listen to her sales pitch while exercising on a treadmill beside her.

She brought a small cooler to class that I assumed had cold water. One day, during the floorwork session, I saw her casually pull out a frozen bangus, offering it to a surprised classmate who was dutifully doing her abdominal crunches beside her.

Another time, I arrived to find our cardio room had become a tiangge. She hung clothes on all the cardio machines. The staff gave me a look that said: "We tried to stop her."

The last straw was when a jar of kinilaw was broken in her locker. It took us a week to get the smell out. She was a nice person but she just couldn't get selling out of her system.

Stepsister

We had a client who liked to work out in solitude and in complete silence. Even if there was no one else in the gym, she wanted the instructors to stay far away from her. They couldn't even make eye contact.

If there was a class going on, she would put cotton in her ears and tell the aero instructor to tone down the music. One day, a particularly perky instructor substituted for the regular teacher.

The client approached her and said, "No clapping and no happy-happy." The startled instructor asked after the class, "Who was that?" When told she was the sister of another client who was Miss Congeniality, the instructor asked, "Stepsister?" The name stuck.

Surprise encounter

Our weighing scale was kept in our consultation room so you could weigh yourself in private. The door had no lock. A client had this habit of completely undressing to weigh herself while a staff member stood guard at the door.

Well, one day the "guardian" got distracted and left her post. Our clueless maintenance man was then asked by our equally clueless receptionist to grab medical history forms from the room.

I don't know who was more surprised and embarrassed but there were screams from both parties. For weeks, our client and maintenance guy could not make eye contact.

Body odor

You would think people would know if they had BO. The signs are all around—the staff uses up a whole can of air freshener, other exercisers cough and gasp for breath, and there is an ever-widening circle separating the "guilty" party and the other people. But apparently people with BO cannot smell themselves.

Telling a person they have BO is probably the most socially uncomfortable situation you can imagine. Staff members pass the responsibility back and forth like a radioactive football. No-body wants to do it.

You know you are going to hurt the client's feelings no matter how tactful you are and you also know you will probably never see him/her again. But you have to do it; otherwise, you could lose your other clients.

My memories of these encounters are not pleasant ones. I have had a one-hour lecture on the dangers of getting cancer from deodorants, been almost physically attacked, told to my face we were all imagining things, and that smelling that way was "sexy." One woman even broke down, crying that her husband was leaving her for his secretary (the connection is still lost on me).

Showdown

There was a time when mornings at the gym would be quite tense. There was a daily battle of wills between a hefty bodybuilder type who liked rock-n-roll music and a meditative type who wanted to work out with soft music or no music at all.

Whoever got to the gym first won round one. The first person to use the rest room would lose the next round. If the bodybuilder went first, he would return to silence. If Mr. Yoga went ahead, The Rolling Stones would blast him.

One day, they had the ultimate showdown, alternately switching the music on and off for about five minutes. After that, they called a truce and decided to come at separate times. Whew!

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- f. Time of transaction (24-hour format)

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Editor Emmie G. Velarde



Backstage drama at Regal mall show

DURING THE MALL SHOW FOR Regal Films' fantastic four MMFF entries, Iza Calzado and Alfred Vargas were kinda sweet to each other backstage. Their co-stars started teasing them, but Iza's BF, Jerry Garcia, and Alfred's GF, LJ Reyes, need not be alarmed. They were just probably being chummy since Iza and Alfred are both *malambing* by nature. No hidden desires—or is extra attention equivalent to attraction?

• Another behind-the-scene "drama" at the mall show was Keempee de Leon ignoring Pauleen Luna. Maybe he's still hurting after she ditched him. To downplay the scenario, Pauleen told her co-stars, "Mas close pa nga ako sa driver ni Kimpoi kaysa sa kanya!" Then she turned to the driver, saying, "Di ba, Manong?" That must have driven Kimpoi nuts!

• Jolo Revilla was spotted in Temple Bar with a brunette. He told a friend, "Wala na kami ni Grace but we are on good terms for the sake of our kid Gabby. Okay din kami ni Tita Osang. Peace lahat." That's a Jolo good fellow for the holidays!

• In her patented tacky manner, Ethel Booba tried very hard to create a stir at the Pink Film Festival, shrieking and laughing boisterously while watching a movie. The audience got really irked! What a way to steal the show when she isn't even part of it!

• Vina Morales had every right to slap Borgy Manotoc for his foul statements about her on DJ Mo's radio show. Could it be true that after their confrontation, Vina's BF told Borgy to respect women? Well-meant advice. A naughty insider asks, "Di ba may pananagutan na yung BF ni Vina? Sa'n yung respect na sinasabi niya?" Right

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal



words from the wrong mouth?

Shake Rattle & Roll 8

REGAL Films' "Shake, Rattle & Roll" sends shivers down my spine. But it also makes my heart tingle because the proud mom in me will never forget the time my son IC Mendoza bagged a Best Child Actor for his role in "SRR 4."

He's back in "SRR 8" as a teen "actress." IC is in the "LRT-2" segment with Manilyn Reynes, Keempee de Leon, Eugene Domingo, Cass Ponti, Milko Palanca, Empress Schuck, Dino Imperial, Charles Christianon, Ehra Madrigal, Mhyco Aquino and his latest "crush" Sergio Garcia.

The highlight is that scene where Manilyn and Keempee are being chased by a monster. They crawl out of an office window more than 30 feet above the ground. It required them to jump from the ledge to a protrusion several feet away. If they missed their marks, they would fall to the ground covered with shards of broken glass. Mane and Kimpoi insisted on doing the stunt themselves.

The other episodes are: "13th floor" featuring Keanna Reeves and Bearwin Meily and "Yaya" top-billed by Iza Calzado and Sheryl Cruz. Meet and greet the cast at the gala premier, 7 p.m. at SM Megamall Cinema 10. Time to SHAKE your booty, RATTLE around the Christmas

tree and let the good times ROLL.

New albums

EVERYONE is rockin' to the sound of Salamin, with the launch of its self-titled debut album under NuGen Music. Composed of Bogs Paterno, EO Marcos, Miks Bersales, Justin Alfafara and Paolo Valenciano, the band's music is best described as a combination of raw sound, inspiring lyrics and powerful arrangements. Its songs like "Pulso," "Maskara" and "Euphoria" are all original. Salamin is MTV Rising Star of the Month. Visit www.salaminmusic.multiply.com.

Star Records has launched Sheryn Regis' album, "Modern Jukebox Collection," a collection of revivals and originals that will redefine jukebox hits. It includes Sheryn's version of "Ang Pag-ibig Kong Ito," "I Remember the Boy" and "Sayang na Sayang." Sheryn is the undisputed *teleserye* theme song queen with the release of "Maria Flordeluna," also in the album.

From Scissor Sisters' smashing album, "Ta Dah" (MCA Music), comes their second single, "Land of a Thousand Words." They deliver this sumptuous sonic cool-down after their playful first single "I Don't Feel Like Dancing." Their quirkiness makes the album all the more surprising.

Holiday jamming

GREAT music definitely heightens holiday cheer but looking for the right kind can be nerve-racking. Visit Livebands.com.ph and find the solution to this dilemma. It will help you locate local bands and solo artists who are perfect for your event—and your budget, of course.

E-mail wateringholeshangrila@yahoo.com.

CHEER FACTOR



ROBERTO ALAGNA

Rebel tenor

MILAN—TENOR Roberto Alagna, who stormed off the stage at Milan's La Scala after he was booed in mid-performance Sunday before last, staged his own show outside the famed opera house on Thursday as the show went on inside without him.

Alagna, 43, arrived in Piazza della Scala shortly before Verdi's "Aida" was due to start and began singing before a crowd of onlookers.

He took a photograph of the theater with his mobile phone "to take a souvenir ... of La Scala because I don't know when I will see it again." Reuters

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TAYO

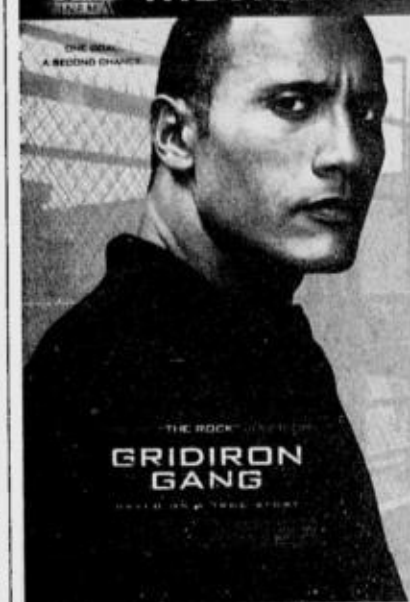
Promo is from December 1, 2006 to January 29, 2007. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 4824, Series of 2006.



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Camp Kilpatrick is considered home to hopeless juvenile delinquents before they incarcerate to the California Youth Authority.

Probation officer Sean Porter (Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson), a top football player back in his high school days, is finding ways to put direction to the lives of these youngsters. Together with fellow officer Malcolm Moore (Xzibit), Porter starts his mission by forming a football team: the Camp Kilpatrick Mustangs.

NOW SHOWING AT THE BLOCK (SM North EDSA)

MTRCB Rating: PG-13



OFFICIAL MEDIA PARTNER



NOW SHOWING

THANK YOU FOR SMOKING
Exclusively at
SM Mall of Asia

AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH
Exclusively at SM Sta. Mesa
and SM San Lazaro



METRO MANILA		
SM MALL OF ASIA 556-0104	SM MEGACINEMA 633-1901	SM CITY SOUTHMALL 806-6888
1: THE NATIVITY	1: THE NATIVITY	1: THE NATIVITY
2: SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD	2: SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD	2: TENACIOUS D
3: CASINO ROYALE	3: CASINO ROYALE	3: RESERVED
4: HAPPY FEET	4: HAPPY FEET	4: SPIRIT TRAP
5: TENACIOUS D	5: TENACIOUS D	5: RESERVED
6: SPIRIT TRAP	6: SPIRIT TRAP	6: RESERVED
7: THE RETURN	7: THE RETURN	7: HAPPY FEET
8: INANG YAYA	8: INANG YAYA	8: WAG KANG LILONGON
9: RESERVED	9: RESERVED	9: REYNA
10: WAG KANG LILONGON	10: WAG KANG LILONGON	10: REYNA
11: REYNA	11: REYNA	11: REYNA
12: FRAGILE	12: FRAGILE	12: FRAGILE
SM CITY FAIRVIEW 935-0749	SM CITY STA. MESA 716-1416	SM CITY BICUTAN 776-3055
1: THE NATIVITY	1: CASINO ROYALE	1: A GOOD YEAR
2: REYNA	2: HAPPY FEET	2: SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD
3: WAG KANG LILONGON	3: AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH	3: REYNA
4: RESERVED	4: SPIRIT TRAP	4: THE NATIVITY
5: SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD	5: AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH	5: TENACIOUS D
6: CASINO ROYALE	6: SPIRIT TRAP	6: SPIRIT TRAP
7: HAPPY FEET	7: WAG KANG LILONGON	7: THE NATIVITY
8: WAG KANG LILONGON	8: SPIRIT TRAP	8: FRAGILE
9: CASINO ROYALE	9: FRAGILE	9: CASINO ROYALE
10: SPIRIT TRAP	10: BARCELONA	10: SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD
11: FRAGILE	11: BARCELONA	11: BARCELONA
12: BARCELONA	12: BARCELONA	12: THE RETURN
SM CITY STA. MESA 716-1416	SM CITY SAN LAZARO 786-2488	SM CITY DASMARINAS (045) 4323201-04
1: CASINO ROYALE	1: HAPPY FEET	1: HAPPY FEET
2: HAPPY FEET	2: AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH	2: THE RETURN
3: SPIRIT TRAP	3: TENACIOUS D	3: SANTA CLAUSE 3
4: AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH	4: BARCELONA	4: FEAST
5: RESERVED	5: THE NATIVITY	5: FEAST
6: SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD	6: WAG KANG LILONGON	6: FEAST
7: THE NATIVITY	7: REYNA	7: FEAST
8: WAG KANG LILONGON	8: TENACIOUS D	8: FEAST
9: REYNA	9: TENACIOUS D	9: FEAST
10: TENACIOUS D	10: TENACIOUS D	10: FEAST
SM CITY STA. MESA 716-1416	SM CITY SAN LAZARO 786-2488	SM CITY DASMARINAS (045) 4323201-04
1: CASINO ROYALE	1: HAPPY FEET	1: HAPPY FEET
2: HAPPY FEET	2: AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH	2: THE RETURN
3: SPIRIT TRAP	3: TENACIOUS D	3: SANTA CLAUSE 3
4: AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH	4: BARCELONA	4: FEAST
5: RESERVED	5: THE NATIVITY	5: FEAST
6: SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD	6: WAG KANG LILONGON	6: FEAST
7: THE NATIVITY	7: REYNA	7: FEAST
8: WAG KANG LILONGON	8: TENACIOUS D	8: FEAST
9: REYNA	9: TENACIOUS D	9: FEAST
10: TENACIOUS D	10: TENACIOUS D	10: FEAST

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Alan Paule and Robert Arevalo
Directed by Gil M. Portes

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LUZON		
SM CITY BACOR (046) 417-3868	SM CITY BATANGAS 885-6401-04	SM CITY LUCENA (042) 710877-80
1: REYNA	1: THE MARINE	1: THE MARINE
2: INANG YAYA	2: REYNA	2: REYNA
3: HAPPY FEET	3: BOA	3: BOA
4: SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD	4: WAG KANG LILONGON	4: WAG KANG LILONGON
5: CASINO ROYALE	5: SM CITY BAGUIO (074) 6197838-39	5: SANTA CLAUSE 3
6: WAG KANG LILONGON	6: SANTA CLAUSE 3	6: BOA
7: TENACIOUS D	7: BOA	7: HAPPY FEET
8: DECK THE HALLS	8: HAPPY FEET	8: ANG PAMANA
SM CITY CLARK (045) 625-5844-45	SM CITY PAMPANGA (045) 9637681-85	SM CITY BACOR (046) 417-3868
1: HAPPY FEET	1: CASINO ROYALE	1: REYNA
2: THE MARINE	2: THE RETURN	2: INANG YAYA
3: FRAGILE	3: THE MARINE	3: HAPPY FEET
4: SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS	4: BARCELONA	4: SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD
5: WAG KANG LILONGON	5: MEE-SHEE	5: CASINO ROYALE
6: INANG YAYA	6: INANG YAYA	6: WAG KANG LILONGON
SM CITY MARILAO (044) 9332013-17	SM CITY LIPA (043) 756-7925	SM CITY BATANGAS 885-6401-04
1: HAPPY FEET	1: STEP UP	1: THE MARINE
2: ANG PAMANA	2: HAPPY FEET	2: REYNA
3: THE RETURN	3: THE RETURN	3: BOA
4: DECK THE HALLS	4: BARNYARD	4: WAG KANG LILONGON
SM CITY CEBU (032) 231-3876	SM CITY DAVAO (082) 2976998	SM CITY BATANGAS 885-6401-04
1: RESERVED	1: MEE-SHEE	1: THE MARINE
2: RESERVED	2: FRAGILE	2: REYNA
3: CASINO ROYALE	3: BARCELONA	3: BOA
4: DECK THE HALLS	4: THE NATIVITY	4: WAG KANG LILONGON
5: THE MARINE	5: FEAST	5: SANTA CLAUSE 3
6: FRAGILE	6: HAPPY FEET	6: BOA
7: HAPPY FEET	7: CASINO ROYALE	7: HAPPY FEET
8: BOA	8: RESERVED	8: ANG PAMANA
SM CITY ILOILO (033) 3209422	SM CITY CAGAYAN (088) 859-2884	SM CITY BATANGAS 885-6401-04
1: MEE-SHEE	1: HAPPY FEET	1: THE MARINE
2: RESERVED	2: CASINO ROYALE	2: REYNA
3: HAPPY FEET	3: FRAGILE	3: BOA
4: ZU WARRIORS	4: BOA	4: WAG KANG LILONGON
5: THE NATIVITY	5: CASINO ROYALE	5: SANTA CLAUSE 3
6: CASINO ROYALE	6: RESERVED	6: BOA
7: RESERVED	7: FRAGILE	7: HAPPY FEET
8: FRAGILE	8: FRAGILE	8: ANG PAMANA

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GALLERIA

1 CASINO ROYALE • THX 1:00 4:00 7:00 10:00	6 SPIRIT TRAP 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
2 HAPPY FEET 12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00	7 THE NATIVITY STORY 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50
3 SA ILALIM NG COGON 12:00 1:50 3:40 5:30 7:20 9:10	8 REYNA 12:20 2:45 5:10 7:35 10:00
4 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2 1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45 10:00	9 BORAT A GOOD YEAR 12:30 2:35 5:00 7:30 10:00
5 TENACIOUS D 1:30 3:35 5:40 7:45 9:50	10 KAMA SUTRA 3 12:00 2:00 4:00 6:00 8:00 10:00

ERMITA

1 TENACIOUS D 12:35 2:50 5:05 7:25 9:50	5 SPIRIT TRAP 12:35 2:50 5:05 7:25 9:50
2 REYNA 12:00 1:50 3:40 5:30 7:20 9:10	6 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2 12:35 2:50 5:05 7:25 9:50
3 HAPPY FEET 11:00 1:10 3:20 5:30 7:40 9:50	7 KAMA SUTRA 3 12:35 2:50 5:05 7:25 9:50
4 CASINO ROYALE 11:00 1:40 4:20 7:00 9:50	

METRO EAST

1 REYNA 1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00	5 TENACIOUS D 11:50 2:10 4:30 6:50 9:10
2 HAPPY FEET 11:05 1:35 4:05 6:35 9:05	6 SPIRIT TRAP 11:50 2:10 4:30 6:50 9:10
3 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2 11:30 1:55 4:20 6:45 9:10	7 CASINO ROYALE 12:30 3:20 6:10 9:00
4 THE NATIVITY STORY 11:50 2:10 4:30 6:50 9:10	8 KAMA SUTRA 3 12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 9:00

NOVALICHES

1 CASINO ROYALE	3 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
2 HAPPY FEET	4 REYNA

CITISQUARE MALABON

1 MAKAMUNDO	1 TENACIOUS D
2 REYNA	2 HAPPY FEET
3 RESERVE	3 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
4 RESERVE	4 SPIRIT TRAP

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THX **CINEMAS**

STA ROSA

1 FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS	1 HAPPY FEET
2 SANTA CLAUSE 3	2 THE RETURN
3 MY FIRST WEDDING	3 SANTA CLAUSE 3
4 DECK THE HALLS	4 STEP UP

DASMARINAS

1 FEAST	1 THE MARINE
2 ANG PAMANA: THE INHERITANCE	2 ZU WARRIORS
3 A GOOD YEAR	3 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS
4 HAPPY FEET	4 MEE-SHEE

IMUS

1 HAPPY FEET	1 HAPPY FEET
2 DECK THE HALLS	2 MEE-SHEE
3 FEAST	3 REYNA
4 REYNA	4 THE RETURN
	5 FRAGILE
	6 THE MARINE

BACOLOD

1 FRAGILE	1 FRAGILE
2 ZU WARRIORS	2 THE NATIVITY STORY
3 HAPPY FEET	3 HAPPY FEET
4 CASINO ROYALE	4 REYNA
5 SANTA CLAUSE 3	
6 REYNA	

ILOILO

1 FRAGILE	1 FRAGILE
2 ZU WARRIORS	2 THE NATIVITY STORY
3 HAPPY FEET	3 HAPPY FEET
4 CASINO ROYALE	4 REYNA
5 SANTA CLAUSE 3	
6 REYNA	

The Perfect Gift All Year Round
A Pre Paid Movie Pass to the Hottest Seats in town.
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For marketing and event reservations please call Marketing Services Department at 395-2188 locals 230 and 240

VIEWS WHO FEEL DE-pressed about the creeping cynicism and galloping pessimism that have made living a disheartening drag for decades now should take heart: Despite all evidence to the contrary, quite a number of people are still kind, generous, helpful and willing to go the extra mile to help those in need.

How do we know this? We watch the "Noypi, Ikaw Ba To?" show on Channel 2 Mondays at 5 p.m. from time to time, and have been gratified to witness some of the "social experiments" that the show conducts to test how urban Pinoy react to situation that require them to be kind and generous to others.

Recently, the show had an actress pretending to be disabled. She asked strangers to help her cross the street. Some people did assist her, but that wasn't the end of the test.

She then asked for some water, and when her instant benefactor bought her a bottle of water, she made an additional request: Could he buy her a meal, as well?

What do you know? A couple of kind people went the whole route! We think we would have stopped after the water, but there are people for more generous and patient than we are, obviously—and thankfully!

Another time, the show had a thirsty man knock on some gates in a subdivision to ask for a drink of water.

A few people didn't respond, but the majority did!

In fact, one especially kind family even gave the thirsty man something to eat, and greeted him with smiles and a handshake!

The best bit was when the show had a young man pretend to have only two pesos in his pocket. When he rode a jeepney, he had to ask the people around him to pay the difference.

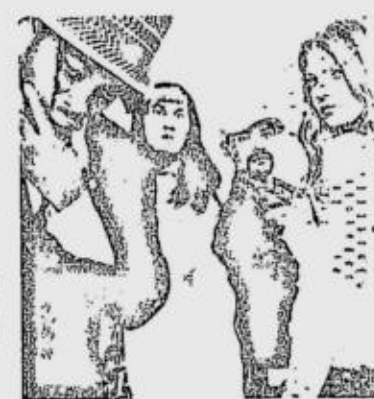
Breaking news: Of the 10 people he asked, eight paid his fare! They didn't know him—from Adam, but they came to his aid.

Sure, some of them may have doubted his sob story, but they went beyond that and decided to help, anyway.

Yes, P5.50 or P7.50 isn't much, but it really is the thought that counts—and those kind souls were certainly thinking the right ones.

Even better, they inspired viewers to be similarly kind and helpful in their own lives. Yes, the possibility of a scam is always there, but generosity is really its own reward.

Thanks to "Noypi, Ikaw Ba To?" for reminding us of that inspiring fact, especially during this Yuletide season of giving. And, for proving that, despite all the coldness and cruelty around us, kindness and love for others are alive and well in the Philippines! Have a happy, holy Christmas, one and all.



BLACK EYED PEAS

Five cities,
one party:

NOKIA WILL WELCOME THE New Year in style by connecting millions of music lovers worldwide as they count down to the final minutes of 2006.

"Nokia New Year's Eve," a global music event stretching across four continents, will feature international artists like The Black Eyed Peas and Scissor Sisters from Hong Kong to Rio de Janeiro.

Those unable to witness the celebration live can experience it via television or the Internet.

The party will travel from east to west, starting from Hong Kong's Ocean Terminal, followed by Mumbai's Andheri Stadium, the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, Ipanema Beach in Rio de Janeiro and roundly off the night in New York.

SHOW TIME

ENTERTAINMENT

Generosity is really its own reward

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2006

Anak TV winners

A grand total of 87 programs from 10 TV stations were recently bestowed the Anak TV Seal of family-friendliness, an award given by viewers themselves, as polled by the Southeast Asian Foundation for Children and Television.

The child-sensitive programs are—ABS-CBN: "Art Jam," "Barney and Friends," "John En Shirley," "Kabuhayang Swak na Swak," "Game Ka Na Ba?," "Rated K," "Salamat Dok," "Sanrio World of Animation," "The New Adventures of Madeline," "Wansapanataym." NBN: "Damayan," "Kusina, atbp.," "NBN Business," "Sport-sist," "Talk Ko To," "The Morning Show," "Tinig ng Bayan." ABC: "ABC Nickelodeon," "Animal X," "Atang Alamin," "Gourmet Every-day," "Healthline," "How Bout My Place," "Island Flavors," "Kabataan News Network," "Mommy Academy," "Nutrition and Health," "Pinoy, Iba Tayo," "Tahanang

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre



Pinoy," "The Practical Cook Show," "Word Made Flesh."

GMA: "Art Angel," "Dora the Explorer," "Happy Tales," "Kapuso Mo, Jessica Soho," "Lovely Day," "Mahiwagang Baul," "Maynila," "Pinoy Meets World," "Wish Ko Lang." RPN: "Asin at Ilaw," "Balikatan," "Biyaheng Langit," "Friends Again," "Home Buddy," "Insight Inside," "Magneosyo Tayo," "May Liwanag," "Signs and Wonders," "Tagumpay sa Bibliya," "W.O.V."

QTV: "Ang Pinaka," "At Your Service Star Power," "Dayoff," "Heidi," "Katoque," "Make Way for Noddy," "RX Men."

IBC: "A Taste of Life," "Earth Files," "Good Take," "Japan Video

Topics," "Serbis on the Go." SBN: "Buhay Pinoy sa Telebisyon," "Oras ng Himala." Studio 23: "20th National Quiz Bee," "700 Club Asia," "7th Heaven," "Breakfast Supersized," "Gameplan," "Math Tinik," "Postman Pat," "Sineskwela," "Sports TV," "The Key of David," "Y Speak," "NET 25: Arts 21," "Convergence," "Euromaxx," "Gabay sa

Kalusugan," "House Calls," "In Focus," "Kapatid sa Hanapbuhay," "Open Line," "The Planet," "Tomorrow Today," "Tribe."

'Music and Lyrics'

Hugh Grant and Drew Barrymore co-star in the new romantic comedy, "Music and Lyrics." Grant plays a washed-out '80s pop star who is finally offered a comeback

by a reigning diva.

The catch is that he has to write a hit in a matter of days, and he's never written lyrics. So, he's forced to collaborate with Barrymore's character, who has a way with words, but is an emotional mess after a breakup.

Can they rise above their problematic lives and give themselves another chance?

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
For inquiries, call: 687-6963
GUARANTEED SEATS
MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

1	TENACIOUS D	1:40, 4:00, 6:20, 8:40, 11:00
2	HAPPY FEET	1:05, 3:35, 6:05, 8:35, 11:00 G
3	CASINO ROYALE	1:10, 4:20, 7:30, 10:40 PG 13
4	A GOOD YEAR	2:55, 5:40, 8:25, 11:00 PG 13

SHANG CINEPLEX

1	TENACIOUS D	MTRCB R-13 12:40, 3:00, 5:20
2	THE NATIVITY	MTRCB GP 1:20, 3:30, 5:40
3	HAPPY FEET	MTRCB GP 2:30, 5:00
4	CASINO ROYALE	MTRCB PG 13 A GOOD YEAR MTRCB PG-13 4:30

PREMIERE THEATRE
MTRCB PG-13 12:45 6:15
MTRCB R-13 3:30

Movies and schedules are subject to change without prior notice.

Catch the Cineplex Special
Come and watch a fun-filled, side-splitting comedy of the record-breaking Broadway smash hit: "THE PRODUCERS" and one of the longest running shows on Broadway: "RENT" Both EXCLUSIVELY showing at the Shang Cineplex starting December 13, 2006
Ticket Price: P120.00

POWER PLANT

CASINO ROYALE 007 PG13 1:05, 4:00, 6:55	HAPPY FEET G 1:10, 3:30, 5:50	A GOOD YEAR PG13 2:30, 5:00, 7:30
TENACIOUS D IN: THE PICK OF DESTINY 1:50, 4:00, 6:10	SPIRIT TRAP R13 1:45, 3:55 BORAT R18 6:00, 8:00	THE NATIVITY STORY PG13 1:20, 3:30, 5:40, 7:50

GREENHILLS CINEMAS

1	SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD	11:50, 2:10, 4:25, 6:40, 9:00 PG-13
2	A GOOD YEAR	12:00, 2:30, 5:00, 7:30, 10:00 PG-13
3	DECK THE HALLS / THE NATIVITY	11:40, 1:50, 4:00, 6:10, 8:20, 10:35 GP
4	TENACIOUS D	11:20, 1:35, 3:50, 6:05, 8:20, 10:35 PG13
5	HAPPY FEET	11:00, 1:15, 3:35, 5:55, 8:15, 10:35 GP

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OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2006

MMTA
METRO MANILA THEATERS ASSOCIATION
MOVIE GUIDE

NOW SHOWING

Masagana CINEMA (Pasay) tel 833.3290 / 833.3274	1 SHAOLIN 2 VS. EVIL DEAD 2 SPIRIT TRAP 3 KAMAZUTRA
Center Mall Cinema Baguio Center Mall, Magaypay Avenue (Baguio City) tel (074) 6440244	1 ANG PAMANA 2 PITONG DALAGITA
Jade Cinema (Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03	1 ZU WARRIOR 2 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS 3 THE MARINE 4 INANG YAYA
Cinema 2000 Walmart Center, China Rocas Ave. cor. Antonio Arzoz Pda del Pilar, Alabang City tel 856.4234 / 816.4236	1 CASINO ROYAL 007 2 HAPPY FEET 3 THE NATIVITY STORY 4 SPIRIT TRAP
Centre Plaza Cinema (Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007	1 THE MARINE 2 PITONG DALAGITA
EASTWOOD CINEMAS Eastwood City Mall 2, Eastwood City E. Rodriguez Av. (C-5) Quezon City tel 887.9163 or 72	1 TENACIOUS D 2 HAPPY FEET 3 CASINO ROYAL 4 A GOOD YEAR
Star Mall (Mandaluyong) tel 7266150	1 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD - 2 2 SPIRIT TRAP 3 RESERVED
Metropolis www.clicktelly.com.ph (ALABANG) tel. 856-4285, 6433994	1 MAKAMUNDO 2 KAMASUTRA - 3 3 ZU WARRIOR 4 HUWAG KANG LILINDON
THEATRES 1000 N. Ave. Cor. E. Rodriguez Av. (Pasay) tel 887.9163	1 CASINO ROYAL 007 2 ANG PAMANA 3 FLAG OF OUR FATHER
PACIFIC MALL CINEMAGIC Pacific Mall Lucena tel (043) 550-5371	1 THE MARINE 2 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE 3 RESERVED 4 RESERVED
Filinvest (Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72	1 TENACIOUS D 2 THE NATIVITY STORY 3 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD - 2 4 HAPPY FEET 5 SPIRIT TRAP 6 CASINO ROYAL 007 7 INANG YAYA 8 REYNA 9 KAMASUTRA - 3 10 HUWAG KANG LILINDON
Cinema 2000 Walmart (Urdaneta) tel (075) 568.6771	1 BARANG INANG YAYA 2 CASINO ROYAL 007 JAMES BOND
Cinema 2000 Metrotown (Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729	1 ANG PAMANA 2 THE RETURN 3 CASINO ROYAL 007 JAMES BOND 4 BORAT
Cinema 2000 Walmart (Gapan) tel (044) 4867736	1 CASINO ROYAL 007 JAMES BOND 2 INANG YAYA
Lianas Cinema (Pasig) tel 640.4748	1 MAKAMUNDO 2 FLAG OF OUR FATHERS
Blue Wave Sundang Highway cor. Mayor Gil Fernando Street, Sta. Mesa, Manila tel 5941927	1 THE NATIVITY 2 THE RETURN 3 HAPPY FEET 4 RESERVED
Lianas Cinema (Alabang) tel 856.1276	1 MILLION DOLLAR BABY 2 MAKAMUNDO 3 PARASO SA GUBAT 4 THE COVENANT
Lianas MovieCity (Columba) tel (049) 545.7202	1 FEAST 2 DARK DANCERS 3 FLAG OF OUR FATHERS 4 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
Fiesta World Mall (Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790	1 MAKAMUNDO 2 HAPPY FEET 3 THE RETURN 4 STEP UP
Berma Cinema (Baclaran) tel 879.2030, 879.2029	1 MAKAMUNDO 2 SHAKE ON THE PLANE

MOVIES / SCHEDULES / PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

'If only my friend Ronnie were here'

By Nini Valera

TWO YEARS AFTER HIS DEATH, Fernando Poe Jr. is still being mourned by friends in the movie

industry, according to one of his closest buddies, Josie Tagle. Tagle, whose career as a bit player in the movies was launched by FPJ in the '60s, told

INQUIRER Entertainment on Thursday, the actor's second death anniversary, that she visits the FPJ Studios in Quezon City almost everyday to "talk" to the actor.

"I go to his office and talk to him, as if he were still alive, listening to my problems... joking with him," Tagle said. "I miss him badly."

She said FPJ's death had left small film workers bereft of a benefactor who footed their medical bills when they fall sick, and who even buried their dead.

"Losing FPJ is like losing Philhealth benefits," Tagle said. "You never had to ask, either. He knew what you needed."

She recalled that, two weeks after he died in December 2004,

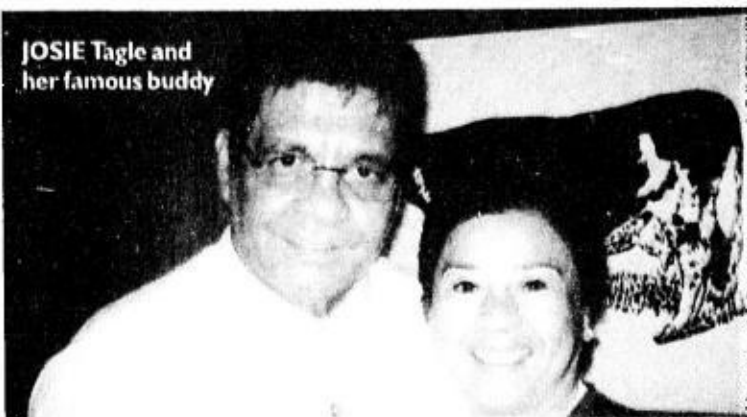
FPJ's generosity still spilled over to the movie industry workers, who by then had formed the Nagkakaisang Manggagawa ng Pelikulang Pilipino.

"It was Christmastime, and we were preparing gift bags to distribute to the neediest among us," Tagle narrated, "when packed goods were delivered to us—left over from the aid that FPJ had shipped to typhoon victims earlier that year."

Tagle, 55, first met FPJ when she was 16. "He cast me as a bit player in one of his movies," she said. "We became close friends, and I appeared in all of his movies. I was also a sidekick, runner, and confidante to Ronnie."

When FPJ campaigned for the

JOSIE Tagle and her famous buddy



presidency, Tagle was among the organizers of the actor's sorties.

Shortly before FPJ died, Tagle asked him for help in setting up her own small business. He would have seen to that, she is sure.

"It's not like he singled me out to help," Tagle said. "He was helpful to everybody. Whenever

he saw a poor person on the street, he would walk over and give him money."

Recently, her electric power at home was cut after she failed to settle the bill. She said she had to borrow money from three people to be able to pay up.

"If only Ronnie were here," she sighed.

ARMAGEDDON
THE END... IS ONLY THE BEGINNING.

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DEC 23 & 24
11.30AM / 2.30PM

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THE NATIVITY 12:10 / 2:30 / 4:50 / 7:10 / 9:30	REYNA A GOOD YEAR 7:10 / 9:40	HAPPY FEET 12:10 / 2:30 / 4:50 / 7:10 / 9:30
ALL THE KING'S MEN 1:40 / 4:20 / 7:00 / 9:40	CASINO ROYALE 4:10 / 7:00 / 9:50	INANG YAYA 1:00 / 3:10 / 5:20 / 7:30 / 9:40
ALL THE KING'S MEN 5:20 / 9:00		

MALL 5

SPIRIT TRAP 12:40 / 2:40 / 4:40 / 6:40 / 8:40	CASINO ROYALE 12:00 / 2:50 / 5:40 / 8:30	TENACIOUS 'D' 1:20 / 3:40 / 6:00 / 8:20
SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD 12:05 / 3:15 / 5:35 / 8:05	KAMASUTRA 3 12:10 / 2:10 / 4:10 / 6:10 / 8:10	

For ticket inquiries, please call TicketNet at 911-5555 or log on to www.ticketnet.com.ph

ARANETA COLISEUM

PBA PHILIPPINE CUP Dec. 20 4:35 pm ALASKA vs WELCOAT 7:20 am RED BULL vs GINEBRA
CARTOON NETWORK LIVE: CARTOONIVAL Dec. 29, 30, Jan 1, 2 & 3 - 4:00 pm & 7:30 pm

SPIN CITY

Porkchop video album

Porkchop Duo, the internationally acclaimed comedy tandem, is coming home for Christmas to promote its latest video album titled "Porkchop Duo Part 2."

The video will feature the duo in songs and comic routines that represent Filipino humor.

The Porkchop Duo's first album picked up a Gold Record award for outstanding sales.

After 27 years, it has released 14 albums and performed live in 21 countries.

Christmas selection

The album "Let There Be Peace On Earth: A Sony BMG Music Entertainment All Star Christmas" features past and present Christmas hits from the label's top roster of OPM artists.

Among the songs in the selection are "Even Santa Fell In Love" (Lea Salonga), "Paskong Nagdaan" (Sharon Cuneta), "Sana Ngayong Pasko" (Ariel Rivera), "Spageti Sa Pasko" (Sextomb), "Christmas Party" (Eraserheads) and "Last Year's Christmas" (Jimmy Bondoc).

AT THE CINEMAS

Reserve your tickets by texting SURESEATS GB3 or SURESEATS G4 to 2333 (Globe) or 211 (Smart) or log on to www.sureseats.com for web reservations. Movie schedules may change without prior notice. For verification, please call 720-7777.

G1	1 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2	2 HAPPY FEET	3 SPIRIT TRAP	4 REYNA
G4	1 LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE	2 TENACIOUS D	3 CASINO ROYALE	4 THE NATIVITY
GB1	1 TENACIOUS D	2 HAPPY FEET		
GB3	1 A GOOD YEAR	2 HAPPY FEET		
ATC	1 THE NATIVITY	2 SPIRIT TRAP	3 TENACIOUS D	4 LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE
ACC	1 DECK THE HALLS	2 MEE-SHEE	3 FRAGILE	4 HAPPY FEET
M2	1 HAPPY FEET	2 A GOOD YEAR		
	3 THE NATIVITY	4 SPIRIT TRAP	5 TENACIOUS D	

At the Activity Center

Customer Service text hotline: 0917 6095900
Customer Service Numbers: Glorietta - 752 7272; from 10am to 9pm
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GLORIETTA	ALABANG TOWN CENTER
Paskong K.O. December 14 to 15, 2006	Anson Exhibit December 11 to 22, 2006
AYALA CENTER CEBU	MARKET! MARKET!
Christmas Carols w/ One World String Orchestra December 16, 2006	Christmas Goodies Bazaar December 11 to 15, 2006

GREENBELT Holiday Harmonies with the Philippine Madrigal Singers
December 2, 9 & 23, 2006

Onstage Repertory Philippines presents SOUND OF MUSIC
at REP's Globe Theater - November 11 to December 17, 2006
For inquiries, pls. call 887-0710

Ayala MUSEUM Watch RILES: LIFE ON THE TRACKS
A documentary by acclaimed Filipino director Ditsi Carolino
December 15, 2006 / 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM

ARMAGEDDON
THE END... IS ONLY THE BEGINNING.

Featuring The Dream Tag Match
JOHN CENA & BATISTA VS. KING BOOKER & FINLAY

GLORIETTA 1 CINEMA 3
DECEMBER 22 - 7 PM
DECEMBER 23 & 24 - 11:30 AM & 2:30 PM

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For inquiries, pls. call 893-4254 or 893-1563

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